■ Lifestyle
Pinay now designs for Sarah Jessica Parker

■ World / A9
Bloodiest month for US troops

Pauno dadayain ang eleksyon?

■ Business / B1
Peso slides back to P56 level

■ Metro
3,000 cops to monitor Labor Day rites

NATIONAL ARTIST Nick Joaquin in the eye of another artist in 1996, the late Neney Plaridel.

200 Edsa 3 protesters make it to Malacañang

By Jaime Laboy-Jocellano

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Friday, April 30, 2004 ▪ 36 pages / vol. 19 / no. 143

Roco says prostate cancer recurred

Shows medical bulletin to prove illness benign

A PARTY! Group fills up cavernous Ayala Avenue during a show-of-force grand rally staged on Thursday by the true believers of evangelist and presidential candidate Bro. Eddie Villanueva. For two hours, traffic stood still.

By Michael Lim Ubac

THE PROSTATE cancer that struck Alyansa ng Pag-Asa standard-bearer Raul Roco eight years ago has returned but appropriate measures have been taken to arrest it.

The 62-year-old former education secretary yesterday released to reporters the medical bulletin on his health issued by his doctors in the United States on April 22, confirming publicly for the first time the recurrence of the rare malignant illness for which he was operated on in 1996.

Roco, at a news conference at his home in La Vista, Quezon City, denied he was hiding anything about his real medical condition.

Roco was on vital patient at the Clinton St. Baptist Hospital, an institution owned by none which is a two-hour drive from Houston, Texas.

Explaining his treatment, Roco said the "intelligent chemicals" injected into his blood stream had killed the cancer-causing cells, and repaired the tissue in his bones, where they were located.

"Until now, the medicine is still fighting the illness in my body that they [say] was already," Roco said.

"But, ironically, [it] is considerable and can be treated. So Roco is not hiding anything. There is no hesitance in his continued service to the country if blessed by the Filipino people."

Jaime Galvez-Tan, a medical doctor and Roco's campaign manager, said the back pains time turned Roco to seek US treatment were caused by slow-moving cancer cells that took eight years to change their smooth cancer they are three people," Villanueva said in an interview

(more on A10)

May Day Eve: Nick Joaquin National Artist dies; 86

By Nikki Cuaresma and Rudi S. De Vera

NICK Joaquin managed to take a stroll with a nurse last Friday down the rented (and cooled) confines of his cancer.

It was another National Artist for last year was saying farewell to his beloved Manila, a favorite setting for his works, which spanned almost three-quarters of a century and which made him the most recognized name in Philippine letters.

And now the master is gone. The wry labor of Philippine imagination, the magic in the mirror at midnight on May Day Eve, will never be the same.

On Wednesday, Joaquin's household at 37 Gomez Street in his tranquil portrait, reading newspapers, and drinking beer, his other famous passion aside from the written word. The four bottles he imbibed that day proved to be his last.

Joaquin died yesterday morning after suffering cardiac arrest, apparently in his sleep, at his last Asian home.

He would have turned 87 on May 4.

"He died the way he wanted to... peacefully and without having to be hospitalized or attended to by a doctor," (more on A11)

Bro. Eddie draws thousands at Ayala rally

By Blanche S. Rivera and Margaux Ortiz

CONFETTI and balloons fell continuously from some buildings in Bangsa Filipinas (literally heaven) Edsa to Villanueva stayed a rally on Ayala Avenue in Makati to rotten opinion polls show-

ing him running last among five presidential candidates.

"How can we be defeated? They [rivals] are spending billions but they do not have passionate people like you," Villanueva told an upbeat crowd.

Police estimated the crowd at 30,000, but organizers placed it at 80,000 to 100,000 at 5:15 p.m.

"The politicians' billions would not mean anything on election day... so, less there is massive cheating. I hope those who are planning to cheat will change their minds once they see these people," Villanueva said in an interview

(more on A10)

POSTPARTUM of the ARTIST as Nick Joaquin as writer's writer as passionate lover lover as object of our collective affections.

3 bishops doubt Comelec ready to run honest poll

By Marichi R. Marfil and Christine Avendaño

THREE of the country's most senior archbishops was met yesterday of poll-monitor fraud in the May 10 polls. Election Commissioner Resurreccion Borra said the poll body needs prayers,

not a church rebuke.

The newly formed group included Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines president Fernando Capalla of Davao, Manila Archbishop Emeritus Jaime Sin and Cebu Archbishop Ricardo Cardinal Vidal.

The archbishops and top lay leaders attended the alarm against possible widespread cheating at the launch of a broad coalition against vote fraud.

Calling itself the Coalition for Honest and Peaceful Elections—or Coalition for 2004—the group questioned the capability of the Comelec to conduct an honest vote.

"We cannot allow the results of any manipulated exercise to frustrate the true will of the people," the coalition said in a statement.

"We cannot allow this frustration to evolve into a national catastrophe

(more on A12)

'THE FOURTH TENOR'

Women swoon, men wish they could do opera

THE PLANET! Unrivaled classical act, Andrea Bocelli, as the Mandarin Oriental with Ruby Arceo and his girlfriend Veronica Berti.

By Chelo Batol-Fortunato
Lifestyle Editor

"THIS SITE! of weather is perfect," said Andrea Bocelli, the world's most popular tenor who arrived in Manila yesterday morning and was met by Cebuanos by his attendees. Up on of two days ago, it was very cold in Italy, where he keeps his home in Tuscany.

For once, here was a celebrity performer who had no complaints about the heat. "It's only the air conditioning that I have to be careful with," he said. He was, without a doubt, the hottest classical act on the planet.

At a press conference held at the Mandarin Oriental Dasmariñas Cabau for just a couple of hours after his arrival, he apologized for his English, which he said was very bad but was now worse after a 15-hour flight. He was hardly exuberant, and it was obvious that much of the spontaneity and flavor of what he said was lost in translation, but he promised, "Tomorrow, singing, I will do my best."

Bocelli, who lost his sight at age 12, is scheduled to perform live at the Araneta Coliseum at 8 tonight after a three-year negotiation spearheaded by socialite philanthropist Bebe Arenas. Tickets to the one-night only concert—priced as low as P500 and as high as P13,000 (some say P25,000)—are so good as sold out, not so much because proceeds will benefit the tenor's foundation but because this is touted as the event of the year. And because Bocelli, with his lyrical voice and salt-and-pepper hound, "makes women swoon and men wish they could sing [opera]."

Not overlooking things critical the quality of the voice, he said, "You need to entertain your voice on the one hand and, on the other, you need silence. Before I sing, I have to stay silent all day."

Admitting to stage fright, he said he would never be more nervous about performing, knowing that his mother and idol, Franco Corelli, had preceded him in Manila in a performance with soprano Renata Tebaldi many years ago.

He said the world is full of wonderful tenors, citing Christina Aguilera, Ronan Jones and

(more on A12)

Journalism versus Literature?

By Nick Joaquin

The following speech was delivered by the late Nick Joaquin, then the Ramon Magsaysay Awardee for Journalism, Literature and Creative Communication Arts, [illegible]

(This is from part 1)

THEY GRATEFUL am I for the Magsaysay award given to me, and I like to think that it honors both my work in journalism and my work in literature. In other words, that it honors both Quijano de Manila [that's me as journalist] and Nick Joaquin [that's me as a literateur].

I say this because many think I am a sort of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde—although they're not at all agreed about which of me is Dr. Jekyll and which is Mr.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

FRIDAY, APRIL 30, 2004

Second FRONTPAGE

WEATHER FORECAST

US renews travel warning on RP

By Jaroslaw Anting

THE UNITED STATES government has reissued its advisory to all Americans about terrorist threats in the Philippines, particularly in Mindanao, warning them of potential violence in the run-up to the May 10 elections.

Issued on the US Embassy's website, the new advisory updates the Department of State's existing security alert that was to expire end of May. It includes more information about the elections, as well as other developments like the recent abduction of an American businessman, and the Superferry 14 bomb attack in February that killed more than 100 people.

Terrorist threat to Americans in the Philippines "remains high," and that the US Embassy in Manila "continues to receive reports of ongoing activities by known terrorist groups," the department said.

"In view of a number of security-related incidents and the possibility of future terrorism, and other violence or criminal activity, Americans traveling to or residing in the Philippines are urged to exercise great caution and maintain heightened security awareness," it added.

The state department noted that responsibility for the Superferry 14 blast had been claimed by the Isnilon Abu Sayyaf group which, it said, had threatened similar strikes on other shipping lines. It also said the communist New People's Army continued to pose a danger.

As the national elections approach, the department said, US citizens in the Philippines should boost their security precautions because the two groups, which "Philippine experts as terrorist organizations, might try to disrupt the polls.

The department reiterated its travel ban on Basilan, Tawi-tawi and Jolo, capital of Sulu province, due to kidnappings and other criminal activity. Americans were also told to defer non-emergency travel to Mindanao.

It said it continued to receive information about future bombings in Philippine airports, passenger vessels and seaports, particularly in Mindanao.

Because of bomb-related incidents in Manila, the department said, US citizens should avoid crowds and crowded places, such as nightclubs and bars, and to be especially vigilant in other public areas like shopping malls, or even in passenger buses.

It explained: "Extremist groups present in Southeast Asia, such as Jemaah Islamiyah, have demonstrated transnational capabilities to carry out attacks against Western interests. Extremist groups do not distinguish between official and civilian targets."

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Palace says terror advisory a knee-jerk response

INDEPENDENT Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday dismissed warnings issued by the United States and Canada about terror threats in the Philippines.

The spokesperson, Ignacio Bunye, ensured that both governments should check with their diplomats here to get the real situation.

"They are persons on the ground and they know the real situation," Bunye said in a statement.

The US State Department on Wednesday updated an existing security alert for the Philippines that had not been due to expire until the end of May.

It incorporated information about the May 10 national elections as well as the January abduction of a US businessman in Manila and a suspicious passenger ferry fire that killed over 100 people in February.

The Al-Qaida-related Muslim group Abu Sayyaf had claimed it planted a bomb aboard the ferry, causing an explosion that triggered the fire. Authorities later uncovered several unexploded Abu Sayyaf relatives, one of whom claimed to have carried out the bombing.

"The terrorist threat to Americans in the Philippines remains high, and the US Embassy in Manila continues to receive reports of ongoing activities by known terrorist groups," the travel advisory said.

"In view of a number of security-related incidents and the possibility of future terrorism, and other violence or criminal activity, Americans traveling to or residing in the Philippines are urged to exercise great caution and maintain heightened security awareness," it said.

Canada said "threats from various terrorist groups have increased" and advised its citizens against traveling to the troubled southern Philippines.

Mindanao is a bastion of Muslim separatists rebels of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front. The government has arrested some commanders of the group of providing sanctuary and training bases to al-Qaida-linked foreign Islamic militants.

Security forces have been placed on high alert to thwart possible attacks ahead of the May 10 elections and to limit violence related to the polls.

Bunye maintained that the terror warnings "have nothing to do with the standing law that we are a safe place to invest in."

"I am only reminded that the travel advisories are a knee-jerk response to breaking news of national threats that are shocked related," he added. AFP

Drilon bewails 'crass' prop

By Christine O. Avendaño

SENATE President Franklin Drilon yesterday assailed the opposition for waging "crass propaganda" through the use of political advertisements.

In a statement, Drilon called on the people to "rise above these malicious attempts to malign the President—masquerading cheap and below the belt accusations as political advertisements."

"None of these should be the stuff that our next President should be made of," Drilon said.

He urged the people not to believe "in empty claims, unfounded observations and figments of tainted imaginations."

"If the opposition cannot wage a decent and moral political campaign, what more could we expect of those should they be able to attain the reins of government?" Drilon said.

"We should never allow that to happen," he added.

Gov't frees 10 political prisoners; 22 more to win freedom

THE GOVERNMENT has released 10 political prisoners, part of the 32 leaders it has promised to free by May 5, as part of multilateral peace talks with communist insurgents.

Silvestre Bello III, the chief government negotiator in the peace talks, said a crown has already ordered the release of detainees Crispin Beltran and 9 others, a "quorum of one" to form the congress of New People's Army commander-in-chief.

"We'll be released anytime soon. It won't take a week," Bello told the Inquirer over the

Beltran was pregnant when she was arrested in Pangasinan province on Aug. 5, 2002. Her baby was born while she was in the hands of the Department of Social Welfare and Development.

Beltran pleaded guilty to illegal possession of explosives, a non-bailable offense, in exchange for the release of other political detainees, a good number of whom are sick and dying.

Beltran's release, a member of the negotiating panel of the communist National Democratic Front, was not displeased with the pace of the release of political detainees.

"It could be slow," she told reporters in Filipino yesterday. She claimed only three inmates have been freed so far. Christine Esguerra

Top Palace graft-buster wants out

By Arnold D. Nozaleda

MALACAÑANG, Ang Good Government Chair Dante Kanna Jimenez involved his investigations in the face of alleged sweeping corruption in the Macapagal administration and other Malacañang-involved personal PAGC rulings that linked some Cabinet men guilty of graft.

But in an interview with the Inquirer, Kanna admitted he had mulled over the possibility of resigning to attend to his wife Elena, a dentist based in Davao, who suffered a stroke two months ago.

Kanna, who celebrated his 60th birthday yesterday, said he did not push through with his plans.

He denied becoming disheartened by the alleged deepening election-related graft in the administration or the reversal of PAGC rulings by Malacañang's Committee of Five under Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo.

"I'm staying on because I love my country and I think we have the right persons in the Palace," Kanna said.

But Palace and Ombudsman sources said Kanna did tender his resignation early this month, to take effect on May 10, election day.

They said Kanna told Romulo that he wanted to devote to private law practice and to be close to his wife in Davao.

"He goes to Davao almost every week. He can hardly cope with the travel expense since he has been paying for his own fare. He can't bear the thought of his wife suffering another stroke without him around," said an Inquirer source in the Ombudsman's office.

The Palace source said the President dismissed Kanna's offer to resign. He said Romulo pointed out to Kanna the importance of a "moral giant" like him leaving the administration.

"The opposition will feast on the issue, claiming that the best and most honest officials are leaving the Macapagal administration," said the Palace source. "We need this like a hole in the head."

The sources pointed out how Kanna had taken on blatant Cabinet members Raul Roco, Hernando Perez and Raimundo Brigueza—then education, justice and agriculture secretaries, respectively—who were linked to graft cases several years ago.

Ping urges supporters: Protect your votes

By Norman Bordadora and Carlos Pabico

(error) vote if you must.

Presidential candidate Sen. Panfilo Lacson yesterday called on his supporters to step up their vigilance in guarding their votes.

"My key senatorial bet, Mayor Victor Ney Caron Padilla, urged his supporters in being ready to vote to guard their votes in the last elections. I am urging our supporters (now) to being vigilant by (after) (election)," Lacson said during his campaign visit in Cagayan de Oro.

The Supreme Court earlier issued a ruling that declared as main opposition party the Angara wing of the Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino, instead of the Aquino wing that backed Lacson as president bearer.

This means, among other things, that Lacson will not be given a copy of the certificates of canvass from the Commission on Elections. Neither can he field accredited watchers to polling precincts.

But Lacson said he remained confident he can win, since many of his supporters involved in the security were retired and active members of the Armed Forces and the Philippine National Police.

In any case, he said, his political tandem had laid out contingency plans, including the printing of tally sheets, statement of votes, identification cards and appointment papers for designated poll watchers.

"Where signed by members of the Board of Election Inspectors, these (tally sheets) are as good as the certificates of canvass which the SC decision has deprived us," Lacson said.

And despite failed unification efforts with the main opposition standard-bearer, Fernando Poe Jr., he still believes the actor will eventually slide down to become his running mate.

"Lacson said unification could still be effected with the actor sliding down, but not with him backing out. In short, he said: 'Yes, not withdrawing from the presidential race.'"

But apparently, neither is Poe. In Cadiz City, the actor's bid secured a boost with the defection of Rep. Celso Lobregat, a key Lacson supporter.

Lobregat, who is running for city mayor, said the red carpet for Poe's Kabalikat ng Maglalakbayang Pilipino (KAMPI) standard-bearer rolls for the party's grand rally.

During a press conference, Lobregat later explained his decision.

NY report says GMA win likely

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

ANOTHER New York-based consultancy has said that the victory of President Macapagal-Arroyo in the May 10 elections was "now likely" and that she "may even surpass former President Joseph Estrada's 1998 vote tally."

Eurasia Group, which describes itself as a research and consulting firm focusing on political-risk analysis with expertise on 65 countries, cited the results of recent surveys by the Social Weather Stations and NFO Trends showing Ms Macapagal pulling away from her closest opponent Fernando Poe Jr.

In its "Asia Notes" issued on April 26, Eurasia analyst Roberto M. Herrera-Lim said Ms Macapagal was using the survey data to portray herself as the winner, "in what will likely be a successful effort to attract undecided voters."

Herrera-Lim said that as in the 1998 contest, the President's 5 to 10 percentage-point lead may grow as undecided voters could choose to vote for her.

"With the polls showing about 10 percent of the electorate still undecided (and an even larger portion demonstrating 'soft' preferences), Arroyo has a chance of exceeding former President Estrada's 39.9 percent support in 1998. In fact, she is reportedly aiming for an outright majority," Herrera-Lim said.

Bear Stearns

Bear Stearns, a New York-based investment firm said in its April 27 research report that the President was likely to win but with a narrow margin. It also said the May 10 elections could be tainted with allegations of cheating.

With only two weeks to go before the election, Poe's "disorganized campaign is unlikely to turn things around," the Eurasia Group report said.

It said the only reasonable scenario for a Poe victory was the withdrawal of Sen. Panfilo Lacson from the race and strong endorsement of two large religious groups, the Iglesia ni Cristo and the El Shaddai.

But Eurasia said these developments were "unlikely and perhaps insufficient," adding that Lacson's recent body language indicated he was not withdrawing.

"Without a unified opposition, the INC will most likely support Arroyo," Herrera-Lim said in his report.

Michael Defensor, Ms Macapagal's campaign spokesperson, said the President's camp has formally sought the support of El Shaddai, the leading Catholic charismatic group.

He said the President has also written the INC's executive minister Eraño Manalo last week asking for "guidance and support."

"We respect the stand of the INC and we do not want to preempt their decision which they will issue at the right time and we will respect this. Even with the El Shaddai, we have a formal request for support through a process and we also respect their choice for the coming elections," Defensor told reporters.

Eurasia Group said even if Lacson dropped out of the race and Poe was endorsed by the INC and El Shaddai, "we doubt whether a sufficiently large portion of their members would follow those endorsements to put Poe on top."

Herrera-Lim said late-campaign rallies and election-inspired violence were unlikely to lead to serious instability around election time. While there were highly politicized factions in the military, their ability to mount a coup was minimal, he said.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Friday, April 30, 2004
3rd Week of Easter

1st Reading: **Acts 9:1-20**
Gospel: **Jn 6:52-59**

The Jews were arguing among themselves, "How can this man give us flesh to eat?" So Jesus replied, "Truly, I say to you, if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. The one who eats my flesh and drinks my blood live with eternal life and I will raise him up on the last day.

"My flesh is really food and my blood is drink. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood, live in me and I in them. Just as the Father, who is life, sent me and I have life from the Father, so whoever eats me will have life from me. This is the bread which came from heaven; unlike that of your ancestors, who ate and later died. Those who eat this bread will live forever."

Jesus spoke in this way in Capernaum when he taught them in the synagogue.

Commentary

St. John's gospel makes effective use of misunderstanding as a method of teaching: ch. 3 (Nicodemus), ch. 4 (the woman at the well), and today's passage.

The phrase "eat my flesh and drink my blood" was wide open to misunderstanding, especially, one must say, by his particular audience. There was an expression "to eat someone's flesh," meaning to slander a person; this could have put them on the wrong track for a start. In addition, their Scriptures had some rather ghoulish texts like Isaiah's, "I will make your oppressors eat their own flesh, and they shall be drunk with their own blood as with wine" (Is 49:26). Such texts were about vengeance, not about intimacy and communion. There was also the more neutral expression "flesh and blood," meaning just human life: as when Jesus said, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven (Mt 16:17)."

Christians tended to see the separate mention of flesh and blood as a sign of the death of Jesus, but the more common view among scholars now is that it means: the whole living Christ.

But the fact is that his listeners were puzzled. And when they asked for an explanation, he didn't offer one. There has been no shortage of people down the ages who were wholly eager to offer explanations: some in the terms of pagan philosophy. But what do we do with things we have "explained" (the word means "flattened out")? We put them aside. The words of Jesus stand there, calling us to something deeper than the intellectual satisfaction that explanations give. We are hungry in deeper places than that.

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Former DPWH exec says he was cleared

A FORMER public works official who is running for mayor in Cabanatuan City, Nueva Ecija, has been linked to the anomalous P1.2-billion national computerization program (NCP) contract with the Philippine Forest Corporation (PFC).

Lakhdar Yhossefi, former director of the Bureau of Maintenance of the Department of Public Works and Highways, said, "I do not know of any government audit of my assets and liabilities when in fact I had allegedly failed."

In a statement to the Inquirer, Yhossefi said DPWH Secretary Florencio Abad and other department officials had cleared his retirement in October 2003.

He said news reports that said he was being investigated "would be the handiwork of my political rivals who are out to do everything to stop my impending victory on May 10."

Graft investigators under the Ulterjdk Check Coalition Encrugted Yhossefi as one of the government officials who had evaded from office in the wake of allegations they had misused P6 million worth.

The other officials were former Transportation and Communication Assistant Secretary Bebe Magkilat and Bureau of Internal Revenue collector Lucien Espinas.

Magkilat had resigned from his post to run for Congress in Pampanga.

Eddie Magkilat and Espinas, however, who have pending graft cases in the PNCC and the Ombudsman, graft probers said formal charges have yet to be filed against Yhossefi whose case is still under investigation.

Armand Nocum

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No hope for power consumers under GMA–Enrile

ELECTRICITY consumers all over the country are being punished by excessive electricity rates and have no hope at all under President Macapagal.

This was the claim yesterday of Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino (KNP) senatorial candidate Atty. Feste Enrile as he slammed the Macapagal and her spokesperson, Ignacio Bunye, for what he called the administration's "shallow and sublime" view of the country's power supply problems.

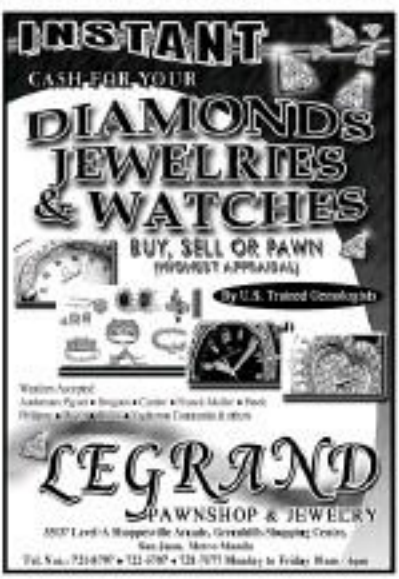
Reacting to a Malacañang statement that there are external factors affecting high electricity rates like the international price of crude oil and Mt. Enrile is not telling the truth," the former senator said it was typical of the Macapagal government's attempt to pass the blame for its "glaring and unconscionable failures to address concrete power issues that punish our people and industries."

"Since 2000, I have been exposing to the public the truth about the malpractices in the power sector like tariff rate abuses of Meralco, the defects and anti-consumer provisions of the Electric Power Industry Rehabilitation Act (Epira) and the ineffective, if not, futile efforts of the Arroyo administration," Enrile said.

He said the President and her energy officials had been deceiving the public.

"When the defective Epira which she had pushed into law reared its ugly head in the devastating Power Purchase Adjustment (PPA) and her public approval rating dropped to 6 percent, Arroyo pretended to do something and defended a catch-ballyhooed 'No Price Hike' to solve the PPA and high electricity rates," Enrile said.

"Even I was fooled for a while that Arroyo really meant to protect consumers from higher and onerous rate increases. However, two years later, the PPA problem is still here and continues to punish consumers," Enrile said.



Teachers on poll duty assured of legal aid

By Dona Z. Pazolagan

LIKE MANY public school teachers, Imelda Bandan had mixed news to greet poll duty again after her traumatic experience running an election precinct in Caloocan City several years ago.

"My nerve deminished in the classroom the next day because I was not given food or water. My hands were shaking while I was counting out the names on the ballots. So I told myself that even if I would be jailed I would never serve in the election again," Bandan said.

But yesterday, Bandan, who is now the president of the Teachers Organization of the Philippines-in-the Public Sector (TOPPS), declared that she had changed her mind about going on poll duty.

The other major lawyer groups agreed to give free legal services to the anxiety 500,000 public school teachers who will be on poll duty on May 10, in the event they are sued for any reason by candidates.

For the first time, the Department of Education has tapped major lawyer groups and mobilized its own legal department to assist teachers who may face lawsuits.

The designated Bar of the Philippines (IBP) and the Public Attorney's Office (PAO) yesterday signed a memorandum of agreement with the Bespal for the "Tanggol Guro sa Halalan 2004" project.

The Philippine Association of Law Schools (PALS), Lawyers League for Liberty (Liberty) and the Legal Officers Association of the Deped-Localgov-Coleo joined in.

"We hope the very existence of the defense team will provide a measure of security for our teachers," and Education Secretary Edilberto de Jesus who had vigorously opposed the fielding of teachers for politics.

"No teacher who is not guilty (of an election offense) should be penalized," De Jesus said.

Commission on Elections Chair Benjamin Abalos, who witnessed the signing, said the P6-million set aside for the teachers' legal aid could go to additional teacher allowances instead.

Aside from the defense team, the Deped also for the first time has put up its Electronic Task Force that would monitor teachers' votes and tabulators on election day.

Teachers make up the Board of Election Inspectors.

Dentists to meet May 1

THE INTERNATIONAL College of Dentists, Philippine section, will hold its 86th annual convention and banquet at 5 p.m. on Saturday at the Upper Deputy Hotel Manila. The affair is highlighted by the induction of incoming officers, the investiture of senior new fellows and the keynote speech of the guest of honor, Executive Secretary Alberto G. Romulo.

The annual meet will start with the business meeting at 1 p.m. followed by the fellowship tea. Dr. Perla Bautista Lacbay at 2:30 p.m. by Mayor Bb. Lucelyn C. Fernandez of Mt Rtio City.

The new ICD officers to be inducted: Estellinda Salazar-Galang, president; Hortensiano F. Villareal, president-elect; Ms. Norma S. Dizon, vice president; Ms. Teresa G. Amador, treasurer; Blandina Ong and Elias C. Pascua, directors and Antonio A. Tandoloan, immediate past president.

The WORLD

Editor Lourdes R. Gueco

Bloodiest month for US soldiers

FALLUJAH, Iraq—The US military has rushed more tanks and other armored vehicles to Iraq after requests from commanders in the bloodiest month for American troops since Saddam Hussein was toppled.

"That sector is either in Iraq now or is arriving as we speak. Its those requests were quickly filled," US Marine Corps Maj. Gen. John Sattler told reporters at the Pentagon by phone from the Gulf waters of Qatar on Wednesday.

Sattler said the requests were made by commanders battling to stamp out guerrilla attacks in the so-called "Sunni Triangle" north and west of Baghdad, including the flashpoint city of Fallujah where US Marines intensified their air and ground attacks.

As US helicopter gunships and jet aircraft pounded several districts across Fallujah, west of Baghdad, President George W. Bush said in Washington: "Our military commanders will take whatever actions necessary to ensure (the city)."

The previous 24 hours saw the most devastating display of US firepower since American forces encircled Fallujah three weeks ago after the killing of four mercenary contractors and the mutilation of their bodies in the city.

Bush, seeking reelection in November vaunted Iraq a "learning campaign zone," said there were "pockets of resistance" in the city but "most of Fallujah is cooperating to normal."

Black smoke rose above the palm-dotted Golan district and heavy firing echoed elsewhere, but US officers said they were holding back from an all-out assault on the city of 300,000 in hopes that guerrillas might yet agree to turn in heavy weapons.

But his said there were "somewhere around 1,500" guerrillas in Fallujah, including former members of Saddam's Republican Guard military units and foreign Islamic militants.

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, whose organization is helping form an Iraqi government in line with a planned US handover of power in Baghdad on June 30, urged restraint by American forces.

"The more the occupation is seen as taking steps that hurt the civilians and the population, the greater the ranks of the resistance grows," Annan told a news conference in New York.

With Fallujah doctors stating some 600 people have been killed in the siege, US forces are wary of "iron bar bloodshed in the city—about 50 km from Baghdad—inflaming public opinion across Iraq and the Arab world.

There were no reports of major civilian casualties in Fallujah in the latest fighting.

In Fallujah a year ago, US soldiers killed and wounded dozens of demonstrators, angering Hussein in a city that has become a hotbed for resistance to the US-led occupation.

A year after Saddam's fall, who spent his 67th birthday in the custody of US forces on Wednesday, American troops are trying to quell rude threats to the now-elderly Iraq—from the Fallujah guerrillas and Shiite rebels in the south. Reuters

GIs accused of abusing Iraqi prisoners

ABU GHURAYB—American soldiers at a prison outside Baghdad have been accused of forcing Iraqi prisoners into acts of sexual humiliation and other abuses in order to make their talk, according to officials and others familiar with the charges.

The charges, first announced by the military in March, were documented by photographs taken by guards inside the prison, but were not described in detail until some of the pictures were made public.

Some of the photographs, and descriptions of others, were broadcast Wednesday night by the CBS News program "60 Minutes II" and were verified by military officials.

Of the 16 people reported in March to be facing preliminary charges, three have been recommended for court-martial trials, having completed the military equivalent of a grand jury proceeding, a senior Pentagon official said last Wednesday. The decision on convening courts-martial is now up to Lt. Gen. Ricardo S. Sanchez, the senior American commander in Iraq.

The other grand jury hearings, called Article 32 proceedings under military law, have been delayed at the request of defense counsel.

The CBS News program reported that poorly trained American reservists were forcing Iraqis to, among other things, conduct simulated sexual acts in order to break down their self-esteem before they were raised over coolness for interrogation.

Charges against the soldiers included assault, cruelty, indecent acts and maltreatment of detainees, Pentagon officials have previously said.

Gary Myers, the lawyer for one of the enlisted men charged, said in an interview that the soldiers had warned the six enlisted soldiers at a suppression and had failed to address adequately the responsibilities of senior commanders and intelligence personnel involved in the interrogations.

Top officers at the prison, including a brigadier general, face administrative review, officials said. They are no longer stationed at the Abu Ghraib prison near Baghdad.

Myers said that the accused men, all from an Army Reserve military police unit, were told to authorities say the pressures by more senior American interrogators, some of whom they believe were intelligence officials and outside contractors. New York Times

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Thailand sees more attacks by Islamic militants

PATANI, Thailand—Thailand's defense minister warned Thursday of "second and third waves" of retaliatory attacks after a series of scrutinized raids on security outposts by Islamic militants left 113 people dead in the kingdom's bloodiest carnage in more than a century.

Hundreds of troops fanned out across the Muslim-dominated south in Yala, Pattani and Songkhla provinces following Wednesday's coordinated pre-dawn assaults, carried out largely by teenagers with machetes and a few guns and aimed at unveiling weapons from arms caches.

One attacker died overnight, raising the official toll of insurgents killed to 108, although critics alleged civilians were among the dead. The greatly armed attackers were stunned almost by gunfire from security personnel who had been tipped off about the raids and suffered only five deaths.

Hardliners presented as busy clerk dead, human rights groups expressed outrage at the government's overwhelming retaliation in the clashes, and many people warned of more violence by minority Muslims in this predominantly Buddhist nation.

"I think it is the beginning of the people's war," prominent Islamic preacher Vithaya Sharmal said.

Defense Minister Chavalit Thanajaro told reporters that hundreds of comrades of those who died are still around "and waiting for the right time for revenge."

"Troops must be on maximum alert and swift preparation for the second and third waves of attacks," he said.

Residents also were outraged that during the clashes security forces stormed the Kreu Se mosque in Pattani, killing 32 people inside. The government described the victims as militants but Vithaya said many were residents who had gone in to pray and were trapped when a small group of militants sought refuge there.

"Killing people in a holy place—in a mosque, in a monastery or in church—is unacceptable. And I do believe that several innocent worshippers were among the dead," Vithaya said.

He did not elaborate and the claim could not be verified independently.

The government ordered the officers in the swoops search of his command. Gen. Panlop Pinmanee told reporters Thursday he had "no choice" but to search. However, he acknowledged it was "a mistake" that "may have hurt the feelings of our Muslim brothers."

Human Rights Watch urged the Thai government to investigate what it said appeared to be "disproportionate" force in the clashes.

Officials have blamed the escalation of violence in southern Thailand since early this year on Islamic separatists, who have launched daily attacks killing policemen, teachers and officials from the Buddhist-dominated government.

Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra says the insurgency is fueled by money from local drug traffickers, corrupt politicians and separatist ideology. He, however, insists that they don't have any foreign links.

Muslims are a minority in the predominantly Buddhist country but dominate the southernmost provinces bordering Malaysia. They cite unfair treatment by the central government as the reason for the separatists, although some observers also blame the recent violence on wider Muslim anger against the United States and its allies such as Thailand over the war in Iraq.

Chavlit, the defense minister, said the attackers were trained militiamen and that it was possible "some of them were trained abroad." He did not elaborate. Officials have said in the past also that some of the militants in the south have received training in neighboring Malaysia.

Chavlit said each group of attackers was made up of about 20 young men, led by a commander generally in his mid 30s. AP

OCEANS, MOUNTAINS AND FISHING
Fijian fisherwomen stand on their boats as they work in front of an island's mountain range near Suva, April 29. Canoes are still used by fishermen as a means of getting to deeper waters in the South Pacific island nation that is made up of more than 300 islands scattered across 100,000 sq. km. of ocean.

China SARS cases increase

BEIJING — Investigators targeted a southeastern province Thursday in their efforts to determine whether SARS emerged from a Beijing laboratory and made its way into the Chinese heartland, contributing to the latest eruption of the persistent disease.

The World Health Organization team traveled to Anhui province a day after China announced another suspected SARS case in the capital and said the virus in retested condition. Taiwan, meanwhile, reported a suspected case Thursday—a former traveler to the mainland.

Two confirmed SARS cases and seven suspected cases have been disclosed in the past week, but China's government and WHO have both said they believe the problem is limited and under control.

The official Xinhua News Agency said the WHO team's plans include visiting the 25-year-old female graduate student named Jiang, whom authorities think was infected with the SARS virus at Beijing's Institute of Virology before returning to Anhui. AP

WORLDBRIEFS

Suicide car bombing in Gaza

GAZA CITY—A Hamas militant was killed and four Israeli soldiers wounded in a suicide car bombing on a Gaza Strip settlement Wednesday, while a leading Palestinian peace campaigner was briefly arrested in east Jerusalem. Israeli military sources said a bomb-filled car apparently packed the narrow center as it by vehicles and apparently on a mission to ram the Kfar Darom settlement exploded when troops opened fire on the vehicle. Four soldiers traveling in a car just behind the jeep were wounded by the blast, two of them seriously, the sources added. Militants from the Izzedin al-Qassam Brigades—the two-armed wing—identified the dead attacker as Tareq Hamid, 22. He might have had explosives in their nearby Hamas-run refugee camp. AFP

N. Korea agrees to new talks

BEIJING—North Koreans agreed to attend talks in Beijing next month aimed at ending up a fresh round of six-nation negotiations on its nuclear weapons drive, officials said Thursday. It was over North Korea's nuclear programs has been deadlocked since October 2002, when Washington said the Stalinist state had broken a 1994 nuclear freeze by launching a secret weapons drive. Two rounds of six-party talks—bringing together the two Koreas, the United States, Japan, China and Russia—have failed to narrow differences over the US demand and Pyongyang's declaration it was running an enriched-uranium program. AFP

Sharon may not be charged

JERUSALEM—An interim legal report has found Israeli prosecutors lack enough evidence to charge Prime Minister Ariel Sharon in a bribery scandal that has threatened to topple him, a television station said on Wednesday. The news, with per Sharon avoiding an indictment as he heads toward a mid-year vote on the return of his right-wing Likud party on Sunday on a Gaza Strip pullout plan that has drawn threats from Likud peace making to the core. Israel's chief prosecutor has officially recommended bringing charges against Sharon in the bribery case, Channel Two television said in an advisory team set up by Attorney General Menachem Mazuz had given over the prosecutor's draft repeatedly and decided there was insufficient evidence. "They all reached the conclusion that the case stinks, but you don't rest in court based on bad feelings," the television said. Reuters

Ban on terrorist arms

UNITED NATIONS—The UN Security Council voted unanimously on Wednesday for a US-drafted resolution that would punish rebel leaders who provide WMD technology to terrorists. The resolution would obligate all 191 UN member nations to punish "non-state actors" dealing in parts and technology for weapons of mass destruction. Even Pakistan, which had misgivings until the last minute, voted for the resolution in the 15-nation council, giving the Bush administration one of its allies a clear victory. Pakistan admitted this year that Abdul Qadeer Khan, a scientist revered as the father of the country's nuclear bomb, had smuggled nuclear secrets to North Korea, Iran and Libya, and was under house arrest. Reuters

Syria vows tough line after blast

DAMASCUS—Syria said on Wednesday it would not tolerate terrorism after an armed group set off a bomb in the tightly-controlled capital's diplomatic quarter and four people were killed in ensuing gun battles. Syrians were shocked by the unprecedented strike at the heart of the autocratic state that sometimes no dissent. Security forces exchanged fire with four men after they detonated a car bomb outside an empty former UN building in the Mezze district on Tuesday evening, killing two assailants and wounding one security man, the state-News news agency said. Reuters

Across the NATION
Senior Editor Tony Bergonia

Solon probed for pork barrel misuse

By Jaime B. Kalanduyan
The Visayan Bureau

CEBU CITY—The Office of the Ombudsmen-Visayas is investigating allegations that Cebu Rep. Clavel Asas-Martinez circumvented part of her pork barrel fund to her personal bank account.

The fact-finding inquiry followed a report of the DA's Bantay sa Pilipino (CSP) in Cebu that P13.5 million of the congressman's Philippine Development Assistance Fund (PDAF) was deposited to her account at the bank of the Philippine Islands Branch in Pasay City.

Director Virginia Santiago said she would form a panel, composed of associate graft investigation and prosecution officers, to look into the matter.

She added that they would also check the authenticity of the CSP report that was sent to their office last Monday.

Martinez is GSP-Cebu first vice president, while her daughter Ma. Cielo is the treasurer.

The congresswoman welcomed the investigation, saying she had not done anything wrong because the money was already with its intended recipient, the municipal government of Bogo, where her son Celestino "Tessy" Martinez II, is the mayor.

She told the reporters that the allegation was a "smear campaign" meant to destroy the political bid of her husband, Celestino Martinez Jr.

Supposedly, Martinez did not, however, say what projects in Bogo were funded by her PDAF.

Based on the GSP report, which was quoted by local news papers, the P13.5 million was part of the P26 million of Martinez's PDAF that was released in three tranches to Bogo town.

The municipality of Bogo issued a check of P7.5 million to the GSP on June 13, 2003, which was deposited to the council's trust fund. The money was allegedly withdrawn on the same day using GSP checks payable to cash, which was allegedly received by the congresswoman.

On Sept. 16, 2003, Bogo issued a second another check of P5.5 million to the GSP. Like the previous transaction, the amount was later withdrawn and received by Martinez.

The report said Martinez later deposited P600,000 to the GSP Cebu Sto Cristo II.

On Sept. 22, 2003, a check of P11.5 million was released by the Bogo municipal government payable to the GSP.

The check allegedly did not go directly to the GSP's account because the congresswoman allegedly assisted the check changed into a manager's check.

The GSP Bogo branch then called the GSP Council to ask for a resolution authorizing the conversion of the check into a manager's check.

The manager's check was deposited to the GSP Cebu Limasawa branch in BPI Cebu City and was later transferred to Martinez's private account (BPI-Pasay branch).

Polls becoming deadlier as 3 more men killed

THREE more persons involved in local elections were killed in the last four days in Pampanga, Compostela Valley and Albay.

A Ormoc Filipino supporter of reelectionist Mayor Benjamin Lim was gunned down on Tuesday afternoon while he was manning Lim's campaign headquarters in Barangay Bonsan Gravel in Dapitan, Pangasinan, police said.

In Davao City, a village official of Maragusan, Compostela Valley, who had been campaigning for the party-list group Bayan Muna, was shot dead by a lone gunman on Sunday evening, according to the police.

In Albay, the body of a former campaign leader of an ex-mayor in another town was found floating at the Quipia River here with bullet wounds on Sunday.

Supt. Neil Tabino, city police chief, said they were still establishing the motive of the attack.

But Tabino said he was asking the provincial police to deploy additional policemen in the city during the remainder of the election period.

He said Lim had asked the city police to set up checkpoints in strategic areas to prevent armed men from roaming the city.

In Davao City, Rodolfo Cruz, 48, was manning the campaign headquarters of Democrito Bolisad in Barangay Obrero, when attacked at around 8:30 p.m.

Cruz, a village councilor, was hit in the head and died on the spot.

The police said the lone suspect fled on a motorcycle after firing three shots in the air.

Senior Insp. Jun Wilson, Mandaya police chief, said they were looking at politics as the motive for the attack.

The victim was also campaigning for Compostela Valley reelectionist Rep. Manuel Zarate.

In Albay, police identified the victim as Aladino Flor, 52, of Barangay San Isidro, Sitio Quipia, Jovellar. Rolando Getalo-Fuertes, PhP Newsbreak's Lucen Bureau, Anthony Alindia, PDI Mindanao Bureau and Michael Joe-Angelo, PhP Southern Luzon Bureau

Tourism seen key to terraces' revival

BAGUIO, Ifugao—Department of Tourism officials in the Cordillera are encouraging local officials and members of non-government organizations to help promote agricultural practices designed to restore the Ifugao rice terraces.

Panlilawan Mohican, DOT regional director, said they are endorsing the revival of the Ifugao agricultural calendar that promotes traditional indigenous farming practices of the past to attract local and foreign tourists here.

Mohican said the revival of the agricultural calendar, a strategy to bring back the traditional practices of Ifugao, has become socially and cultural acceptable in Ifugao villages.

"We are strongly endorsing this because in the past, we had been taught of an agricultural calendar [that did] not conform with religious values and norms. So sometimes there is a conflict between new technologies and indigenous farming practices," she told the reporters.

She said tour guides in Ifugao province also promote and practice the agricultural calendar, showcasing indigenous practices and rituals based on nature.

"As a tourist operators consultation in Banaue, there was a concern stressed being used by tour guides using the stage as guides for safe and proper tourism. I think this can be resolved in the Cordillera since the awareness on the indigenous practices is very high," she said.

Mohican said environmental bonding agencies are interested in assisting programs and projects to address the needs and concerns of the indigenous communities. Ben Moses Ebreo, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

Population issues confront major urban centers

DAVAO CITY's top contending parties in the May 2004 elections will discuss this and other burning issues at the

Business-and-Politics Convergence in Population and Development

Marco Polo Hotel, Davao City
April 30, 2004

Hosted by the **Davao City Chamber of Commerce and Industry** (DCCCII) under the auspices of the **Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry** (PCCI)

People Need to Know

- How to cope with urban congestion that cities like Metro Davao are now experiencing
- How to boost economic growth in the region
- How to increase worker productivity particularly in the Tagum-Davao and Digos plantation industries

Leading candidates and party representatives will provide the answers when they meet with some 300 business leaders and civil society members in Davao.

If elected, what will be their policy on population management? What position will population management and human development take in their local development plans?

The people of Davao, like most Filipinos, want to know. And they want to know before they vote for their next leaders on May 10, 2004.

Survey Says...

The February 2004 Pulse Asia Survey has validated the sentiment of the Filipino electorate on population and family planning. It showed that:

- 97 percent of Filipinos believe that "it is important to have the ability to control one's fertility or to plan one's family."
- About seven in 10 Filipinos believe that a fast increasing population hinders the development of the country and impacts negatively on the ability of government to provide employment, health services, food security, education and other key services.
- 82 percent to 86 percent of Filipinos say that candidates in favor of couples' free choice of family planning, a law or measure on population issues, a government budget for family planning, and a program on women's health ought to be supported by the general public.

Business Is Concerned

The Business-and-Politics Convergence in Population and Development is one of a series of forums initiated by the business sector to share the local political parties' stand on pressing population issues, and how these issues affect local and national development, the country's economy, and the welfare of the Filipino citizenry.

The DCCCII has stated its support for the Global Compact and the Millennium Development Goals, which include as major concerns the eradication of extreme poverty, reduction of child mortality, maternal health, and environmental sustainability.

The main objectives of the forum is to highlight population and development as important electoral issues and help ensure that the new set of elected officials who will promote top governance posts after the elections will make these a top priority of their administration.

The forum is part of PCCI's growing advocacy on population management and family planning — a brand of advocacy formed on the formulation of an explicit and effective population policy that is pro-poor, pro-environment, and provides options to drive down the country's runaway population growth.

Davao City: Attracting People and Investments

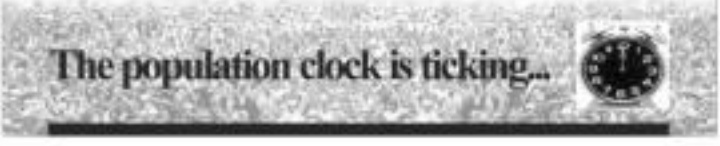
Davao City — the city of the Future — has been voted as one of the most livable cities in Asia. It has done well in maintaining its competitive position, has attracted fresh investments, and has penetrated foreign markets due to its resilient export base and rich pool of skilled workforce.

With 1.3 million people as primary market base, the city is conducive to business. This is evidenced by the presence of top 200 companies in the area.

But growth has its downside. The city now faces such problems as congestion due to the influx of migrants and informal settlers. Its growing population is beginning to stress the otherwise healthy economic landscape of the city. There are many more problems that confront the city now. The business and political leaders will look into these as they engage each other at the Business-and-Politics Convergence Forum.

Business and politics — partners in economic progress, social responsibility, and population and development.

For inquiries, call the DCCCII Secretariat at telephone numbers (082) 221-7313, 222-1402, 221-4148 and look for Ms. Philip Pulvelo or Ms. Eric Antonio Rosas.



Dads seek probe of Baguio land deal

By Vincent Cabreza
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

BAGUIO CITY—The city council formed a task force on Wednesday to investigate the land transaction that allowed taipan Henry Sy to bag a real estate deal here in 1992.

The council also asked the Senate blue ribbon committee to look into the auction of the former Pines Hotel Compound at Loakan Hill, where the SM City Baguio now stands.

Councilor Federico Mandapat Jr. presided the council session of documents, which suggested that the sale was "underpriced" by 70 percent when the Development Bank of the Philippines auctioned a foreclosed foreclosure property owned by Benguet Pines Inc.

Mandapat had protested the auction in 1992 because the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) told the city's stake in a portion of Loakan Hill that the local government had reserved for a public library.

Invalidated

A Makati regional trial court judge invalidated the sale early this year. The court ruled that Benguet Pines Inc., which ran the Pines Hotel at Loakan Hill until 1983, had proprietary rights over the land he bought from DBP and the DENR.

When asked about the trial's position, Miller Dizon, SM spokesperson, told the business that the company would need time to study the legal repercussions of the council's position.

Mandapat said official letters to secure Sy's investment and to cast a new auction for the area on Session Lorem Hill, Inc. rumor the Bureau of Internal Revenue already confirmed that the hill's value at the time was higher than the auction price.

The council resolution to the Senate refers to a 2002 memorandum issued by Baguio assessor district officer Amado Navarro that placed the Feb. 10, 1998 zonal evaluation of Loakan Hill at P9,750 for every square meter.

Revolution

The resolution said Sy manipulated to buy two sets of land at Loakan Hill for only P2,028.98 per sq. m.

Mandapat clarified that the Benguet Pines property, which Sy bought, is distinct from a 54,534-square meter property there that the city government was eyeing in 1990.

The Benguet Pines property was auctioned off by DBP following foreclosure proceedings that were commenced separately to court by the former Pines Hotel owners.

Release

City officials had asked former President Corazon Aquino to release the remaining 54,534-square meter lot to them in 1990.

But on May 5, 1992, the land "was awarded instead to the applicant, Investment Investment Corp., after payment of (Php8,999,993.12)," according to the April 30 resolution.

The government should have earned P233,106,588 from the Henry Sy's sale alone, Mandapat said.

Traffic police chief dies in road crash

BOLINAO CITY—The regional chief of the Traffic Management Group (TMG) in Cotago died after a deadly road collision along the national road here early morning yesterday.

Supt. James Gilbert Gallvez suffered serious head injuries, which caused his death according to attending physicians at a local hospital.

Insp. Nestor Tagunabun, city traffic chief, said Gilbert was on board his Mitsubishi car, which he left Thelma was driving, when it collided with a speeding truck just upon the intersection of Sit. Agatha Station and J. Rosales Street. The couple's car turned into eight of several successive collisions.

The couple was on their way home from the celebrated birthday party around 11:15 a.m., Tagunabun said.

Reasons behind the couple to a nearby hospital but officers in control the police official have not decided.

He died at the hospital several hours after he was brought there.

Mr. Libro remains in critical condition, also due to severe head injuries.

Tagunabun said they have already notified the driver's license of the license driver, titled as Carlo Rubid, 30, a local businessman.

Rubid would also be charged in court, Franklin Cabigiol.

PDI Mindanao Bureau

Pangasinan holds feast for the sea

LINGAYEN, Pangasinan—Pangasinenses take a break from the election fever by celebrating this week the annual Pista'y Dayat (sea festival) in this capital town and the Bangus Festival in Dagupan City.

The Pista'y Dayat, which evolved from a simple thanksgiving activity of local fisherfolk into a week-long revelry, promises to be another unforgettable experience for visitors and residents to celebrate the bounties of the sea.

On the other hand, Dagupan City still finds time for successful entry into the Guinness Book of World Records for the longest barbecue category, prepared a week-long party for residents.

Both affairs will culminate on May 1 when a thanksgiving Mass will be held here and in Dagupan City.

Healing properties

After the Mass, hundreds of Pangasinenses and visitors will flock to the Lingayen Gulf, which riders have believed have healing properties over the day.

In Lingayen, the celebration will feature the Lingua na Dayat (Maiden of the Sea) beauty pageant on April 30, a tourism and trade fair and competitions for floats, sand sculpting, street dancing, lato flying, drum and lyre bands and boat jousting.

The activities also include the awarding of winners for the search for distance coastal towns, a program launched by Gov. Victor Agbayani six years ago to save the Lingayen Gulf from degradation.

This year's winners are the towns of Umiral and Alaminos City (Category A), and Agno and Bolgos towns (Category B).

Hall of Fame

The town of Bani, under the leadership of Mayor Gabriel Navarro, was elevated to the Hall of Fame for bagging the top award yearly since 2000.

President Macapagal-Arroyo has proclaimed April 30 as a special non-working holiday in Dagupan City to allow Dagupeños to join and celebrate the Bangus Festival.

City Administrator Isabel Bacsan said unlike the past two years when the festival was rained-filled as the city aimed for a world record, the festival last year is "back-to-back-to-back!"

"We will just celebrate our victory of being in the Guinness Book of World Records," Bacsan said. **Yolanda Serafin Fuertes, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau**

31 cops sacked in E. Visayas

TACLOBAN CITY—A total of 31 police officers in Eastern Visayas were dismissed from service by various officers by Chief Supt. Deonisio Colonia Jr., police regional director, since he assumed his post in Aug. 1, 2002.

Colonia had also ordered the suspension of 1,127 erring policemen over the same period. The suspension ranged from five to 90 days.

Colonia said the 31 police officers dismissed from service committed offenses ranging from dishonesty, misrepresentation of age and educational attainment), serious irregularity in the performance of duty, grave misconduct to absence without leave of absence.

The highest ranked officer who was dismissed from service was SPO3 Isidro Macera of the Initial police office over rape charges.

The Northern Samar police office topped the list with 11% dismissal of cases followed by the Eastern Samar police office with seven.

Colonia dismissed at least five police officers from the Samar police station while four came from the Leyte police office.

Two policemen from the Regional Support Office of the Philippine National Police in Eastern Visayas (PNP-8), and one each from the Regional Mobile Group, Southern Leyte police station and the Ormoc City Police office were likewise dismissed.

Colonia, when he assumed the post in August 2002, said among his priorities was to restore the trust and confidence on members of the police force in the region.

To achieve this goal, he said, "bad eggs" within the PNP organization must be disciplined and punished.

Joey Gallaviza, PDI Visayas Bureau

WINDFALL

The ongoing political campaign has provided opportunities to unemployed ones like this T-shirt printer in Davao City who hopes newly-painted shirts on the city's streets to dry

Aid package readied for ex-Negros rebels

By Rainy C. Arnaudo
PDI Visayas Bureau

DUMAGUETE CITY—Negros Occidental Gov. George Arnaiz on Wednesday signed an executive order outlining a socio-economic package that would expedite the reintegration into mainstream society of former rebels who were granted amnesty by the government.

The governor issued the order on the same day that 19 former members of the New People's Army received their certificate of amnesty from the National Amnesty Commission (NAC) in a simple ceremony here. The troupe is more than 300 rebels who surrendered in Negros Occidental.

During the ceremony at least 40-45 rebels who were previously given amnesty also received their certificates and ID cards.

The governor's executive order is designed to provide "comprehensive and sustainable package ..."

The package includes technical skills training, financial assistance, unwilling and animal dispersal programs, and health services.

The amnesty grantees and their immediate families would also be included in the province's existing education and special programs.

National Amnesty Commission Chair Alvin Patrimonio urged the provincial government to institutionalize the reintegration program.

He said the local government is in a better position to ensure the success of the government's thrust of peace and reconciliation through the amnesty program because local officials know their constituents and their situation.

Also, he said, it would be easier for the local government units to monitor the reintegration process of the amnesty grantees.

ROUNDUP

Party-list groups file suit

DAVAO CITY—Party-list groups Bayan Muna and Anakpawis have filed charges against senior officers before the Commission on Elections provincial office for re-assigning them from campaigning in Davao City, Cebu, Cebu City, Cotabato City, Agusan del Sur, and Maguindanao, said Bayan Muna field organizer, said the soldiers violated the provisions of the Fair Elections Act of 1991 and the Election Campaign Code when they stopped them from campaigning in Barangay Santican, Davao last April 15. Only three of the nine soldiers were identified. They were Sergeants Rodrigo and Rizal and a certain Soldier, all based at the 10th Civil Disturbance Management Battalion.

John Antonio / PDI Visayas Bureau

Cop faces charges

BACOLOD CITY—A police officer of Escalante City, Negros Occidental is facing charges after his gun accidentally went off inside a gambling joint, killing one person. SPO1 Pablito Arnaiz, canvass defendant of the police station awaiting charges. Reports said Arnaiz's service pistol, a cockpit at about 1 a.m. of April 10 in the village Jupitan, Escalante, about 80km northeast of here. His .45 cal. pistol went off as he was reportedly trying to grab it from his holster. The stray bullet hit Rio Sobrevinte in the head. He was brought to the hospital and died the next day, Senior Insp. Cleofe Lalusa, Escalante police chief, said Arnaiz was not here because charges, aside from administrative complaint for violating the gun ban and orders that he no longer from entering gambling joints.

Cris Evans / PDI Visayas Bureau

3 inmates escape

BAYAWAN, Negros—At least three prisoners escaped from this town's jail Monday and took three firearms after wounding a guard, a police report said. Those who escaped were identified as Ino Alentajan, 21, charged with rape, Jesus Magbanua, 28, and Nicanor Dalan in Gonzales, 26, both facing robbery and murder charges. While the lone guard, PO2 Fulbert Alba Jr., was serving lunch inside their cell, the three overpowered him and one of them shot the guard using his service revolver. The prisoners also took at least two M-16 rifles. The three inmates also fired at responding policemen and made good their escape through the back of the municipal building and towards a forested area.

Belle Mabel Jr. / PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

2 wedding guests killed

CAGAYAN, Negros—Unidentified men shot dead two wedding guests in Barangay Bulad Norte this town Monday. Police identified the victims as Lotsapio Binacalangan, 33, resident of Barangay Mambuhat II, and Rolando Sinag, 25, resident of Barangay Bulad Norte. Investigators said that two suspects, Michael Lanoria, his cousin Ritchie, and a still unidentified companion, fired at the victims using a Carbine and a handgun. The victims died on the spot from fatal wounds in the head and different parts of the body.

Belle Mabel Jr. / PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Molave lumber seized

TAYABAS, Quezon—A six-wheel truck loaded with molave was intercepted by Department of Environment and Natural Resources personnel here on Monday in Barangay Calumpang along the Maharlika Highway. The environment officials led by DENR Lucban Eneida Roxa and members of Tanggol Kalikasan immediately set up a mobile checkpoint when they learned that the wood would be transported to Manila. Before midnight, the team flagged down a vehicle driven by one Benjamin Nolasco from Bantuan and accompanied by truck owner Domingo Soriano. The group found that the more than 1,000 board feet of molave had no transport permit. However, the owner of the truck escaped.

Belle Mabel Jr. / PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

PDM for Vizcaya airport

BAGUIO, Benguet—President Macapagal-Arroyo on Wednesday released P5 million in local officials as part of her commitment to improve the town's airport in Barangay Lublub. The check was delivered by First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo and Transportation Secretary Leandro Mendoza during their visit here last week. The amount will be used for the construction of an airport fence and the expansion of its runway to accommodate bigger planes.

Jun Mascuñana, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

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OPINION

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All in the family

EDITORIAL

TAKING a lesson from the past, our Constitution includes an injunction against political dynasties. But before the prohibition can be put in place, Congress must first pass an enabling law, and this it has not done for obvious reasons. Thus, as the recent Inquirer series showed, mere dynasties now hold sway over many places all over the country.

Dynasties are inimical to the national interest. They reduce public service to a form of property, in which, for the sake of power and wealth, wives, sons and daughters succeed patriarchs in official positions for no other reason than that such positions are considered to be "theirs." Dynasties prevent the wider sharing of power, and the rise of new talent in public life. They reduce local politics to feudalism disguised as democracy.

It is true that the most enduring unit of social organization in this country is the family, or rather, the clan. We have dynasties of doctors, lawyers, diplomats, soldiers, and intellectuals. Why not political dynasties, then? After all, why should one's ancestry serve as a bar to continued public service?

If political dynasties operated in a purely idealistic fashion, this might be so. Our national life is replete with the examples of sons and daughters who followed their fathers and mothers in politics, Ninoy Aquino and Jose Diokno foremost among them. Their examples, however, are the exceptions to the rule, and what is more often the case with such noteworthy leaders is that they only reversed politics after their parents left the political scene.

This small difference in timing is perhaps what separates the race-of-the-mill dynastic from those who try to live up to a heritage of national service. Fathers who put their office to ensure the election of a son, pervert their heritage by using it in an unfair manner. The biggest proof, for example, that a politician's support for a child entering politics represents abuse of power, is President Macapagal-Arroyo.

If being a member of a family with political experience requires that person to continue a family legacy, only the qualified would enter politics. We the Presidency stringently put on to hold the career of her daughter. Left, whose qualifications for the foreign service she had earned on her own, while promoting the candidacy of her son, Mikey, whose only qualification for office seems to be the fact that his mother is the incumbent, if not his being an actor.

Where the general trend is negative, the occasional positive exception must not be used to continue justifying a bad habit. The country will not die if every descendant of a past politician, however good, is mandated by law to refrain from seeking political office. On the other hand, the country could well stand to greatly benefit from putting into effect the constitutional prohibition against political dynasties, by ending the corrupt and corrupting dominance of political clans, and preventing the emergence of new ones.

Public office becomes more effective when viewed not as a lifetime career but a period of national service. The call of duty may come, but it must be limited in duration, allowing those who serve in consecration on the public good and then returning to private life. This makes room for new leaders and new opportunities to serve. It also prevents leaders from being subjected to the moral corrosion that accompanies the exercise of power.

There is no logical reason, then, to object to a ban on political dynasties. It is for the public good. It is for the good of the politicians themselves. Our leaders herald the fact that when politicians seem once held in high regard, they are now held in disrepute. The reasons for this is logical and damning: it is the fault of the members of dynasties that may have risen to prominence on the basis of genuine public service but degenerated over the years to a generic mafia terrorizing the country.

As one cynical saying goes, "Politics is hard, relatively speaking of course—but keep that within the family." The politician facing retirement, who tells a son or daughter, like one Batangas politician did, that they must run for office because he doesn't want anyone else sitting in "his" seat, has forgotten what public service is all about. The son or daughter who follows the father's instructions transforms democratic elections into a farce, and public service into nothing more than a disguise for feudal gain. Such attitudes are a betrayal not only of public trust, but of the ideals that might have originally motivated the patriarchs of political dynasties.

Shortsighted air policy cuts off RP from Europe

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

TOMORROW being Labor Day, and election day being only 10 days away, it might be worthwhile to look at what the candidates asking for our votes have done for Filipino workers. Who has done the most to help our workers? Who has done the least? Who are indifferent to the plight of the laborers?

If the drumbeaters of Rahman Muh de Castro are to be believed, the senator is nothing less of a hero for overseas Filipino workers. As chair of the Senate tourism committee, De Castro says he authored the Migrant Workers Act (R.A. 8179, or the Balikbayan Law of 2002, which packaged a livelihood plan for returning OFWs called "Kabuhayan Program." The law allows OFWs to buy up to $2,000 worth of livelihood tools as government duty-free shops.

Its purpose is to give the OFWs an opportunity to start an alternative source of livelihood in case they are coming home for good. As for those whose contracts abroad are not completed, their immediate family members can avail themselves of the same privilege. The OFW and his family are also provided with entrepreneurial training, livelihood skills and marketing assistance to ensure that they become economically self-reliant.

The Department of Labor and Employment, through the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration, in cooperation with accredited agencies, spearheads the training programs. Thousands of OFWs and their families have already benefited from the livelihood programs, according to the DOTC. Among these programs are money remittance, car repair training, air-conditioning repair shops, electronic and electric repair shops, bakeries, and enterprises that package preserved foods.

The Balikbayan Law, say the drumbeaters, also provides for the creation of a committee assisting OFWs, establishes reception areas for hold OFWs and home Filipino citizens holding foreign passports for faster processing of their documents, and calls for the accreditation of transportation facilities to ensure their safety as well as convenient movement upon their arrival.

One of the most damaging outcomes of our government's excessively liberal aviation policy is the virtual death of the Philippine connection to Europe. While our attention was focused on the open-skies regime of the cartwheeling generosity of the Philippine government over the last six years, the the other hand, European airlines became something evident of our economic planners' shortsightedness.

Here's the big picture of what happened to the RP-Europe route: In 1998, there were eight airlines serving the route. British Airways, Dutsair, Air France, KLM, Alitalia, Lufthansa and Aeroflot, apart from our own Philippine Airlines. Three carriers apparently a combined 39 flights a week between Manila and seven European capitals. 12 of those were stop-services.

Today there are only three carriers left in the sector: Air France, KLM and Lufthansa (which could drop to two as Air France and KLM are merging). They fly a measly 19 times weekly from just three European cities. Not one is a direct flight to Manila; they have to go through another Asian airport. In other words, Manila has lost all direct links to Europe.

This has adverse consequences on tourism, trade and investment flows, cross-cultural and people-to-people contacts between the Philippines and the newly-enlarged European Union, which is emerging as the most important regional bloc of the future.

What transpired in that short span in productive this humongous economic shift, one government, spurred by the National Economic and Development Authority's free trade philosophy, embarked on a massive effort to give away frequency rights to their carriers. They were granted a 250 percent increase in such rights, enabling them to expand flights to the Philippines by 136 percent.

On the face of it, this should have been a routine matter separate from the Europe issue. The Arab airlines are supposed to serve primarily the 800,000 Filipino workers in Europe, but the Arabs, finding themselves flush with excess capacity far beyond the requirements of the Middle East sectors used their surplus seats to raid the European market.

Suddenly, the market was swamped by a flood of cheap, state-subsidized seats dumped by Arab carriers, distorting market forces and forcing European airlines to pull out one by one. Alitalia ceased flying to Manila in 1998, followed in 2000, Aeroflot in January 2002, and Swiss International in March 2004.

The remaining three airlines that previously operated non-stop services to Manila from their European home bases now do so via an Asian hub: KLM flies via Kuala Lumpur, Lufthansa via Bangkok, and Air France via Bangkok. The eastern Manila traffic has disappeared to a point where it is no longer economically viable to offer direct flights to other destinations, in the view of the European carriers. Manila is now a secondary, less-desirable destination, almost an afterthought for tourists bound for Southeast Asia.

Home from the sea

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

THE SCRIPT may not entirely have been written in heaven. Had it been so, Raul Roco would have been stricken ill in the heart of Texas and come home on Easter Sunday. That would have been a perfect ending to his bizarre and necessary debut and victory, death and resurrection. As it was, he was stricken at the tail end of the campaign, and came home only the other day.

But at that, it wasn't a bad version of the Easter story anyway if it didn't resonate with the drama of Easter: it still bore signs of a former ordeals for a general who had just come home from the wars, who wore his scars like medals. One might say almost in spite of Roco himself, who characteristically shunned the hype and became the epitome of humility. Even Chief Inner from Enrile Tan, his campaign manager, that they repeatedly begged him for photographs and accounts of his treatment in the United States, but he refused. He would not allow himself to be turned into a spectacle, he said. He would not exploit his sickness for electoral gain.

So, Raul Roco is not one to provide the stake of sovereign news idol in lieu of that of a Rainier Allan.

But he arrived in Nasa was enough to wrest the hearts of his supporters and everyone who believed in democracy. It didn't matter whether he did not have to be a devout Christian to subscribe to the idea that at the end of things, the exalted will be humbled and the humbled exalted. You saw a spectacle of the humbled being exalted right there.

In many ways, however, Roco's sufficiently good in way or by his temperate standards) interesting should at least say that the news of his death politically, or that of his campaign, is greatly exaggerated. That of course is what his detractors have been saying, notably those who have been cajoling his followers to go the way of GMA. Though why they should think Roco's followers should go to GMA when they are following him to begin with beats me) they do not like GMA, only they can say.

That was what they were saying when Roco suddenly announced a couple of weeks ago that he was leaving the campaign to go to the United States. That was what they were saying when the OSG released its findings showing his ratings had tumbled. That was what they were still saying last Wednesday, when he came back from brief visit: he could neither recover from his physical or political debilitation. His campaign was over, he was as good as dead.

Ah, but don't count the sun out yet.

I don't know how accurately the SWS has gauged the extent of his fall from grace with survey respondents. I myself expected the ballot count, in part because of public commentary that I thought he would continue to rise, and in part because of the suggestion his detractors would put in the minds of the public that he would withdraw. Either one or both would naturally impact on his support the several things discouraged that could be temporary.

The fact is that Roco's media coverage has increased a hundredfold since he was stricken ill. One of the main sources of his slipping in the rankings since the campaign began was his near-complete shutdown in media. He simply did not make good copy. The drumbeats were nearly nonexistent. Everything was overshadowed by the campaign of Fernando Poe Jr.

Then suddenly, after he announced his plans to go to the United States, he became hot copy, hogging front page and prime-time space. The networks and foreign press were scrambling to interview him or his camp. Only this week, he was headline in four newspapers four times. The irony as I said in a previous column, is that he became visible only after he became invisible, he got strong after he got weak. I maintain that exposure to media remains the most decisive element in elections today. Surveys are a variation of it, but that's another story.

The second, which is the reason for the first, is that Roco's campaign has never had an emotional appeal. It has always hit the head rather than the heart, a major gripe of ordinary people in media terms. He delivered pitch may have enlightened, but it did not inspire. Then suddenly his harsh-with-disease has made him a lot more human. It has made him someone ordinary people can relate to, people who see themselves having adversity in the form of deprivation. If not disease, an emotional lesion if not mortality, hopelessness if not physical pain.

None of that of course would matter if it sustained sentiments whether he would continue to run or not, or whether he would be healthy enough to be president or not. Not be crippled double to fear of repeating his—stroke.

Frankly, I don't know. But one thing I do know is that it has strengthened the resolve of those who were for him from the start to support him to the end. It has convinced the scrappy of the "wasted vote"—which has limited reflux campaign for some time now—of the belief that a vote for him would be wasted on someone who couldn't win. He rode and swam, or death and resurrection, however you want it, but gives his campaign a deep moral component. He is no longer just a man on a quest for the presidency, as he started out to be: he is now on a mission to save a sick country. His detractors may not believe it, but his followers do. They no longer care whether he wins or not, they care only to do the right thing.

I have at least heard some people put it that way. They don't sure before how they would vote, they are now.

Who knows? Maybe that will apply as well to those who had begun to tick out of his camp: they might stop dead in their tracks and wait back home. Maybe that will apply as well to those who were thinking of dropped—votes). The number of undecided in three-to-four months outstrips high. Stranger things have happened.

Maybe the exalted will be humbled, maybe the humble will be only exalted.

Bypassed by history

ANALYSIS

Amando Doronila

cal campaign. It is mostly political rumble and an instinct to disarm in break a campaign, especially for the presidency, to adversaries. Erap's declaration is an open war. Senility is not the only mistake and mistake and reveals a weak ability to back a campaign that is demanding and tough even for candidates more healthy than him.

It's hard to fathom what purpose it serves Erap to restart the campaign when the political environment has grown dimmer since his departure. His spirit, probably boosted by the "coming welcome" he received, has created a battle cry, hinting that he has not abandoning and would fight "till the end." He may not be seen, and we are praying for that, but there's the risk of following his sudden departure from the campaign drove doubt on his political judgment.

From a realistic point of view, Erap's return is to the campaign is unlikely to make a difference in his political fortunes. Certainly, his hard supporters will vote for him for sentimental reasons, but their votes are a statement of their adherence to their belief in what Erap stands for and that he is the best alternative among the five contenders for the presidency. They are not going to change the outcome in a race that has narrowed down to two persons: President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo and Fernando Poe Jr. Erap's chances of winning are even thinner than they were before he was arrested by Ilocos.

Time lapsed his departure, Erap was already becoming marginalized by the objective reality on the ground. His campaign had been rushed to the ground at some point and was not taking off the departure left his troops scattered and leaderless. The return will not reassemble the troops who no longer have a visible center to fight for.

Fine of all, it is even less possible for Erap to regain the power he had but two weeks ago. Like war, politics is unforgiving to wounded and incapacitated commanders. His troops may have lived about upon hearing that many people wishing him to regain his beach, but there are not many who believe his presence will reenergize his campaign.

Some people have formed the contention that among the many serious presidential manifestations, Erap is the least chosen. Endowed with his popularity and charisma, it is doubtful if Erap has ever been an alternative to either Ms Macapagal, Poe or Lacson. His biggest drawback was his credibility (he followed) in the epidemic polls midway into the campaign and has been out of it ever since.

Even did present a platform, which is more than what said he said of Poe, his platform is full of platitudes and generalized policy statements, including issues government, opportunity for all, peace, etc., people above all, and education and values formation. Erap's campaign has been on the economy the most important issue in this election, Poe's is clueless. The deficit, a critical issue for this new administration, is ignored in his platform. In Macapagal's economic platform, rising her unemployment, can be handled but neither Poe, for her lacson ever took the issue seriously enough to examine options, they did not offer platforms that would make them exists they are better alternatives to the administration that need to replace.

It is pointless to presage Erap's announcement since in search of alternatives. The time has passed for that. After the swift-moving developments of the past two weeks, including Erap's temporary departure from the field of combat, we can say that the campaign has been overtaken by events. Here's the point. He has been bypassed by the currents of history. Erap's temporaneous to political combat makes his return only pathetic.

An island paradise

"I WISH it was a time when we would not rip out pots and a fire on the beach, close to the island. We would then paddle the water and in the late would jump out of the sea, straight into the pot! That was how much fish we had then!"

That was Ilet Mesquida, guardian of the Calaguan Marine Sanctuary in Candaon, Cebu, describing what it was like in our time on his island to a group of about a dozen visitors from different cities.

His nickname (Ilet) is our own jargon.

PINOY KASI

Michael L. Tan

Say for giving us a bath today? I don't think so. It would be a shame if we heard such scenes from Filipino falsehood. They all talked a time, and we language, when the ocean and rivers were filled with fish. And as an artist, I can believe that, because all over the Philippines, I've found vine many of the traditional fishing gear don't have developed—seems makers for more, pile—were dearth issues for fishing not too far from the shore.

My guess then is that this wasn't exaggerating about the abundance of fish in the Philippines. Even today, the Philippine coastal fishermen still use some marine resources which creatures are crying very hard to preserve through their marine sanctuary, and which is managed by the community from patrolling the waters to doing periodic reef checks to see if they had managed to slow down the destruction of marine life by illegal methods of fishing.

How, you might ask, how did family planning get into the picture? Several Filipino non-government organizations (NGOs), notably Bais Philippines and Save the Children, are now combining family planning with environment programs. Since the waters really need conservation, they've found it interesting environmental conservation by reducing it to an admission of resources and sites and birds, we have to deal with the human population that depletes and destroys these resources.

The issue on the environment is always more obvious in island communities. Maybe because our marine resources were once so abundant, coastal areas have always remained settlers who, perhaps because of the easy life, quickly grew. The demographic surveys have always shown fishing communities as have higher fertility rates. In Calaguan, I found out that households with more than six children square feet of space between siblings. In one case, there was a couple with six children occupying a hut not more than 30 square meters, six space used as a bedroom, kitchen, living room. The mother was 36 years old but looked like she was in her 50s.

Developers have moved over children with seniors and other skin infections, their stomachs bloated from intestinal worms. Childhood ends early to such a setting—there was an 11-year old boy, married and under weight, who came to with some fish for land sangke. Pedro survey shows that in these communities, the wives are dropping out earlier than school to help with fishing.

The options are narrowing for fishing communities, that was not ever providing enough for a family's subsistence needs. A report from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) on the state of coastal waters in the Philippines, for instance, Tubaran in every as far as Malampaya to Verde in southern Sulu, shrimp, scrapes, sea cucumber, and shells, all of which are issues for report. They do this using the samples of organisms, described as indicating species ("pass man's gaze) that cannot compete with large environmental changes, such as pollution, sedimentation, and destruction of habitat.

Dilimangan has developed about twelve livelihoods. There's some seaweed farming going on. There's an eco-tourism program that charges overnight fees to divers, and it's been quite successful, bringing in some P2 million in fees, part of which has gone to the community development fund, including the preservation of a guardhouse and the installation of solar power. But the island still does not have its own health center or health personnel. Visitors don't have a portable water supply. Residents are also aware that tourism, even ecotourism, has its risks, and are thinking of imposing a quota on visitors.

When I visited, the island was already inundated with tourists, parents and children. One cricket caught my eye, something about "Nature Adventure" (against shorts). I asked about the activities but no one was sure which coordinator had gone for it. I found out later that it was a small group, organized on an ecotourism platform. This is an island where the most basic health services are not available, where family planning was only recently introduced. How, anyone has some pregnant one after you and abortion is probably not an option—he choices and lots of family.

It was a fascinating time I studied, but I decided against going on swimming. Some of those who did go out came back glowing, describing the colorful coral reefs and, and how you could fish from there all day to packed like, in this tropical paradise. Unfortunately, for too many of the children in these fishing communities, the reality is that of paradise lost.

Comments to miguel@pinoykasi.com

THEY SAID

Decisions

"An executive must be ready to make decisions; it may not always be right but he must be ready to make it anyway because to stick by it. I would also say that I am like a basketball coach. I am with my people every step of the way."

—Ms Arroyo, PMPC, March 2004, prior to her campaign directors' meeting

Self-determination

"We merely announce what the people want. Our people want self-determination, not necessarily independence, but as long as we are allowed to govern ourselves in our own territory."

—MILF vice chief negotiator Ameril Umbra Kato on the MILF's negotiating stance during Malaysian-hosted, multi-continuing agreement

Election offense

"Any person who threatens, intimidates or actually causes any damage, loss or disadvantage upon any person... to compel a candidate to withdraw or desist from his or her campaigning is committing an election offense."

—Section 264, Election Reform Package as amended based Senate and House Joint Conference Committee Report, as signed by Senate President Franklin Drilon and Speaker Jose de Venecia

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'Timbayayong' and leadership

ONE of the many projects that *pagkabuhay* of Philippines, a group of young leaders of various interest dedicated to the transformation of Philippine society has embarked upon goes by the rather presumptuous name of "ABS-CBN Bayanihan Project."

As designed, the National Initiative on Philippine Leadership was to be a series of conversations across the archipelago and the social landscape to glean insights on what such terms as "leadership," "governance" and "citizenship" mean in the context of "bayanihan." While conceived with the May 10 elections in mind, it was never really meant to be yet another "vote-educated" project. It would instead be a "listening" and "learning" project.

"Public leadership is not the property of the NPC franchise, it really "belongs" to all the church groups, schools, communities, civic organizations and clubs around the country that have adopted the NLI's "template" and developed an agenda among their members. But could the NLI's sessions really goes to its core "mottoes"? Mother Theresa Reyes, the Ateneo and Miriam professor, the "NPL guru" who spins out ideas with her dad Prof. Carlos Reyes, gets the support, we trust, of Jesuit Cardo Jesse dito ga to Jesus Board of the Ateneo Foundation for writing such as NPL's great potential and opening to fund its launch.

Which is why I was not surprised that NPL is alone, save our weapon from a preliminary report written by Mendoza on their homepage from a NPL consultant held in San Carlos City in Negros Occidental.

* * *

SIGA says the talk never forget the Cebuano notion of "timbayayong." He extracted it out of NPL participants in San Carlos City. ... During synthesized on connecting of an connecting with the "timbayayong" concept—acquired, as we all were at that point. Getting a response from the participants was like pulling teeth. It was really hard going for Ella, who was rule facilitator that day. So she decided to pull at something closer to the home. He (Mike) and I and the facilitators we trained the previous days all clearly saw that the middle class, SGO, the shapes of the NPL template was preserving rather than facilitating the discussions.

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

There was a clear communication gap, and at times it seemed almost impossible to bridge. Insofar as I could see, there were in fact three gaps. Firstly, the basic language gap: in this case, Cebuano vs. Filipino and English. Secondly, Tagalog and English are the other. Secondly, there was a vast gap between at least two orders of thinking. Concepts were being offered that can only be communicated in the rich conflation of Cebuano that belongs to a particular world of sugar farming; and beneath that, an earlier Negros Cebuano world of farming and subsistence farming. Every second or third sentence from the participants would be couched in their own specific terms, not in order because of lack of fluency in either Filipino or English, but more importantly, because the English that we all know, which is an urban, modern English, has few concepts that relate to the particular socio-cultural order we were in the midst of. Thirdly, the class divide was ominous. And the middle class mind was embodied in our computer, our projector, and, on the other, conferring one quite different.

* * *

THE FIRST half of mistargeting is clear, [and]. The second half apparently defines the idea of the people's power, carrying that idea with it was brought up when Ella asked for local concepts via which the participants imagine the ideal relationship between leaders and followers.

Ella expressed surprise that none of them answered that the participants had been so trained to offer responses to the standard questions—"what qualities of leaders do you want?"—that they seemed totally unable to articulate their own notions of leader/follower relationships. Nor had they ever imagined that anyone from outside their immediate milieu would be interested in their ideas.

The metaphoric mishandling is related to the "lagalag mahiyawan" Columbian analogy of "middle class schizoid disorder" related to the pan-Philippine concept are issue in Ignatieus. The synopsis we understand via the English-sensing "equality" and "partnership" are tarnished by the fact that the Filipino word for "leader" is *lider*, the Filipino word for "follower" is *tagasunod*. The Filipino word for "equality" is *pantay*, which is the word for "flat." Those words in Cebuano and Tagalog are also affected by a sense of commonality of circumstance (Bathtime for instance is a mark of identity among friends in a close-knit community), therefore, it is ironic that the concept of individual contributed a common depth of experience.

* * *

RACE in San Carlos. Once it was clear that there was need to improve the basic meeting through in their own language, Ella managed to alter the disastrous course of the rest of the day. The participants got into an animated discussion [of] and suggestions on the NPL questions. "What kind of leadership (*pagsulundan*) exists between leader and follower do you believe will unite you in moving from the problematic present to the future you desire?"

Some examples of responses from San Carlos, Bandad, Tanjay, Bais and more (the plans bring the leader's driver and passengers relations and care, caretaker and many problems and responses. Those that the people is fanatical who brought up "mag-uuwi" that is to emphasize a real, legal social contract. In Bais Lubao, we heard, for the first time, the relationship was one between a godparent/godchild. But only in Bais, a bit old, said us. Everywhere else, there was a preference for balikBahan or *bukbuk*.

I believe we have demonstrated the validity of participatory civic education in the Philippines and listening carefully. Our participants are moving in more than halfway. Everywhere it happens once the participants decide to believe we are sincerely going to value what they say, they begin to say the most complex things.

Romblon

LOOKING BACK

Ambeth R. Ocampo

ROMBLON is the island that the late WWII historian referred to as his little book "Look, Strangers, on This Island Now."

The book remained unread on my shelves for a long time since I had little time for fiction and literature, but I finally opened it when I found out that the "strangers" in the title referred to those who visited the island briefly in the 19th and 20th centuries if the people of Romblon knew or even remember that Rizal and Gonzales once walked around their town plaza.

Should the answer to all which there are either, unless I am one of the few who remember that Romblon has the town of a bee or a southerner on a mountain bobby a Pagan weather station and the 17th Church of Jesus Joseph that has undergone a well maintained but badly done "restoration"?

Not content to be Joseph's less successful twin of its church. The town's art historically carved, its main doors with a cherub and flowers, the side door decorated with a medieval sun of the type seen on town seals or old Philippine flags. Inside the church is an old belfry with equally ancient bells, one of which is cracked and no longer rings.

The church interior is already modern but the original vaulting and stones are still extant.

I was directed to the side altar, which was embellished with iconographic symbols of the passion and death of Christ. It was a touching divine until I saw the top of the altar. It was a big orb (globe) with the blood-red face of Christ, a crown, whip, cords of thorns, dice, the holy nail, etc. All these symbols definitely tell the passion story much better than this tableau. The imaginations can be a most potent force that the bloody scenes on screen scarcely are.

Outside the church, I read all the election posters and noticed that most of the candidates had nicknames that began with "M", beginning with Governor Maybelle. Other candidates for public offices were: Mendez, Mejias, Mayo and (if I'm not mistaken) Mendiba. If I had my copy of the 1986 constitution handy at Ayalitan, we could probably tell which pages were seen as Romblon voters' favorite since all the candidates received 1040. I was told that inhabitants of one island have surnames that begin with "P" and that most of the surnames on Tablas begin with "G"—all edited proof of our diverse past.

So much for heritage. My next stop was the Romblon Provincial Museum housed in the limited salvage of marble produced in an economic mine with the island. As soon as the ship docked at 2 a.m., itinerant vendors were walking through our rooms offering slippers, which I found out later was a simple measure used people, called shabbas in Tagalog, for the common person in all the shops were slippers and marble eggs of various sizes and colors. There were also those hard, marble eggs usually displayed on the tables of high government officials, according to their ranks and importance.

The souvenir I was most tempted to buy for its weight were specimens of lapida. As I reached into my wallet, a friend advised me to leave it until it was time for me to die. Be a smarter one, I was also stopped from buying the local mineral water just like mysteriously vanished are of evaporation area.

Weight was a major consideration in picking up souvenirs, as I left the place empty-handed though I did look at some shadow with something pasalubong that I thought would make nice gifts for loved/relatives/friends. I was also tempted to buy a marble chess set with matching table, except that I don't play them. Perhaps one could order dama, shenkers, or even monopoly boards here.

There were many small pieces of sculpture lying about. One that caught my eye resembled the work of Impy Pilapil and it was being sold at the unsigned price of P600. I was tempted about why there were no obscure scenes like the famous bagon "man in the bottle." I guess I spoke too soon, because on the lowest shelf of one store were oversized black marble phallus mounted on stumps.

Romblon may be a simple town, but it has its share of sophistication. I was told that the Department of Trade and Industry Davao and the Design Center will provide some technical support for the Romblon marble industry. There is a lot of promise on this small island, and given the right opportunities, there can be a lesson in marble that might draw people to queue across that the whole island will disappear.

We visited the Sub Pedro Beach Resort in Tampalan can be the Mingos sisters. It is not only listed in Lonely Planet, it is also in the misanthropic memoirs of Mingo Lagusad, who says that he didn't stay in this shack reading his worst off in the coral beach and found intricate pieces of marble, spouse and shards of tiling blue and white ceramics on the ground. This is a sure sign of prehistoric trade and a shipwreck site that we hope can be excavated by our own National Museum's Underwater Archaeology Division.

In much history has open before me an array of two days, meaning there is much more waiting to be found.

* * *

Comments are welcome at aocampo@inquirer.edu

Civility and decency lacking among our lawmakers

LETTERS

A MEMBERS (C/I) Commission of the US Congress is reportedly conducting an investigation on those on the couch about the terrorists' bombing of the twin towers in New York, and to prevent the carnality therefrom ever happening again.

Republicans and Democrats are well represented in the commission. Officials of the past and present administrations, including witnesses outside the government service, have been invited to testify before the commission.

The hearings are carried live on major TV networks. One thing that really amazes me is the conduct of the hearings. There is utmost respect, civility and decency when the are the bipartisan members of the US Congress ask questions and elicit information from the witnesses. The latter are equally civil, respectful and decent in responding their testimonies.

I cannot perceive any open partiality on the part of the Republicans for the Bush administration. On the other hand, the Democrats do not exhibit any open antagonism against the administration. The questions asked are bipartisan in nature—civil and impersonal.

I solemnly wish that our legislators would emulate the example shown by the members of the US Congress in conducting face-finding hearings and hearings mata. They should stop acting like prosecutors and persecutors when questioning witnesses. They should also stop acting like bullies and avoid being pugnacious. Their practice of grandstanding is most abhorrent.

For their information, TV viewers can easily spot those who grandstand before the cameras. If only they can hear the curses of TV viewers. Those who have nothing to do of consequence should shun their mistakes. Those who have something meaningful to say through the English medium should be precise and use sensible amount in their statements. They should not juggle their syllables or convolute their phrases. If they are inane utterances in Tagalog, they should stop preaching; they are not addressing a crowd, but eliciting information from witnesses. They should not act as spokespersons or detractors of the administration or the opposition—they are mandated to observe the due court, no matter what.

Lastly, they should be prepared to reconcile their hearings through reports that contain their recommendations for action by the appropriate boards of government. They have no right to conduct hearings "in aid of legislation," if they cannot collaborate one in an atmosphere of civility, respectfulness and decency.

—APOLINARIO C. BARRO,
42 Mabolo-an St.,
Malabon City

What does it profit to win elections?

ALL eyes are now on vote-counting.

It is unfortunate, however, that in their enthusiasm to get elected, many candidates seem to have forgotten, or worse to have set aside, the basic laws of our land. The first commandment:

The most relevant of these during an election period are:

Sec—"Thou shall not kill." (Use of violence, threats, force, intimidation to secure votes are violations included in this prohibition.)

5th—"Thou shall not commit adultery." (Included are all forms of immorality like lewd shows to attract crowds in the campaign.)

7th—"Thou shall not steal." (Graft and corruption, election fraud, vote buying, "dagdag-bawas," violation of election laws are the most prominent examples.)

8th—"Thou shall not bear false witness against thy neighbor." (Untrue or half-truths, slanderous or libelous speeches that misinterpret the official records of the campaign and false reporting of election expenses.)

Special emphasis should be given to the 9th commandment (coveting thy neighbor). It is almost unambiguously stated. Restriction is an essential element of forgiveness, then one that violates the ethical quality of "election-stealing" gets restitution?

An inquiry reminded: Upon performing a biblical duty: What does it profit a man if he wins gets elected but collect the loss of his love one and only soul?

—ROY V. APOLO,
San Valley, Pamabanger City

Roco on power crisis

THE INQUIRER'S April 19, 2004 editorial "Puno on power crisis" limits the election to two presidential candidates.

"What does Roo think about the power crisis?" he does not have to think, he only has to answer the question to his self-interest.

"

May Day Eve: Nick Joaquin dies at 86

From page A1

Cecile Joaquin-Yasay, one of his nieces, told the Inquirer in a phone interview.

He had no known lingering ailment because he was "allergic to doctors," she said.

Within minutes

His longtime companion, Jojo Sumaraya, said Joaquin was well enough to take his niece Charo Villegas around Intramuros on Friday.

By Sumaraya's account, as quoted in the Philippine Graphic magazine, Joaquin yesterday managed to ask for his daily supply of newspapers and, seated in his bedroom chair, scanned the front pages. It was around 6 a.m.

Sumaraya left the room to prepare Joaquin's breakfast. And then: "When I came back he was sleeping but breathing. I left the breakfast tray and went down. After five to 10 minutes, I went back. He wasn't breathing anymore."

According to Joaquin's wishes, his remains were cremated last night at the Funeraria Paz in Quezon City.

The ashes will be taken to the Santuario de San Antonio in Forbes Park, Makati, until Sunday morning, Yasay said.

At 7 a.m. a necrological service is scheduled at the Santuario on Sunday, after which the ashes will be taken to the Cultural Center of the Philippines for an 8:30 a.m. ceremony honoring Joaquin as National Artist.

Interment will follow at the Libingan ng Mga Bayani.

'National tragedy'

The Graphic, of which Joaquin was corporate editor in chief, described his passing as a "national tragedy."

"To the end, he pushed the borders of literature," said Graphic managing editor Marianne Carandang, recalling how Joaquin "displayed cutting-edge form in the past few months" in selecting contributions for the magazine's short story and poetry section.

Joaquin's recent picks for publication tackled subjects as varied as youthful prostitution, gay and lesbian love, adultery, mother-daughter relationships, and job hunting, Carandang said, adding:

"He was always current; he had his hand on the pulse of life. He timed the pieces according to the seasons and was aggressive in his choices. He never wanted to hide the sexuality, the sexuality and passions of different writers."

"He engaged life with the same passion that he gave his art. He is irreplaceable," said Graphic owner Antonio Cabangon-Chua, Philippine ambassador to Laos.

In Malacañang, President Macapagal-Arroyo expressed a "deep sense of personal loss" for "a very good friend of the family" and a "national treasure," said her spokesperson, Ignacio Bunye.

"In behalf of a grateful nation, I thank Nick Joaquin for sharing his life and talent with us," Ms Macapagal said in a statement.

Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo said: "I lament his passing. An era seems to have gone with him."

Self-taught

Joaquin, son of lawyer and revolutionary leader Leocadio Joaquin and Salome Marquez, was born in Paco, Manila.

He stopped studying at the Mapa High School after three years and taught himself by reading through his father's library.

Joaquin published his first poem at 17 and soon began publishing short stories.

He entered St. Albert College, a seminary in Hong Kong, but left it to continue writing.

Starting out as a proofreader at the Philippines Free Press magazine, where he eventually became literary editor, Joaquin had a long and storied career as a journalist using the pen name "Quijano de Manila." He was editor of the Asia-Philippines Leader magazine until the imposition of martial law.

According to writer Gemino Abad, Joaquin was so incensed by Ferdinand Marcos' shutdown of the media that he refused to write anything that would aid the government.

Abad said Joaquin agreed to be proclaimed National Artist in 1976 on the condition that journalist Jose "Pete" Lacaba would be released from the stockade. Lacaba was released in 1976.

More than 40 books

Joaquin, who once wrote a column for the Inquirer and the Sunday Inquirer Magazine, was the author of more than 40 books and received such awards as the Republic Cultural Heritage Award and the 1996 Ramon Magsaysay Award for Journalism, Literature, and Creative Communication Arts.

Many of his works of fiction, including "May Day Eve," "The Summer Solstice" and "The Woman with Two Navels," are required reading for Filipino students.

His plays, such as "A Portrait of the Artist as Filipino," are considered among Philippine literature's classics.

The first book Joaquin published after the 1986 Edsa uprising was a chronicle of the bloodless revolt, titled "The Quartet of the Tiger Moon."

Among his last books was a biography of the President, "Macapagal Arroyo: Historying Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo," launched in 2002.

Abad said that while fiction was Joaquin's best genre, his forays into other forms, such as historical writing in "A Question of Heroes" and "The Aquinos of Tarlac," also deserve mention.

"Anything the guy touched was top of the line," Abad said.

Low-key

For all that, Joaquin remained "very humble and low-key," recalled Cecile Yasay. "He would win yet another award without us knowing it. He protected his privacy."

He also never openly encouraged anyone in his family to pursue a career in writing, although "we would pick his brain" for his views on various issues, Yasay said.

Prof. Vim Nadera Jr., director of the University of the Philippines' Institute of Creative Writing, said: "Nick Joaquin, by any other name, is the writer's writer. His range and richness can explain why he is called 'the greatest Filipino writer of his generation' or 'the best postwar author in the Philippines.'

"The complexity of his characters, usually a hybrid of the primitive and the civilized, mirrors his deep understanding not only of the Filipino psyche but also of any colonized soul.

"Yes, he is dead, but Quijano de Manila is immortal."

Joaquin published his last work of fiction, "Bat Lake" a novella in four parts, in December 2002. His last book was a biography of E. Aguilar Cruz which he completed in February.

Last March, the CCP relaunched three of his classics: the novel "Cave and Shadows," the short fiction collection "Tropical Gothic," and the non-fiction "Culture and History." *With a report from Juliet Labog-Javellana*

Journalism versus Literature?

From page A1

Hyde. Some say that as creative writer I'm all right but that as journalist I'm strictly potboiler; others opine that it's the newsman in me who's the true writer because the supposed artist is a fake. Of course, there are also those who believe that Nick Joaquin and Quijano de Manila are both equally hack. And I have this sinking feeling that it may be they who are bull's-eye; the others are just bull.

However, I bring me up as a Jekyll-Hyde split personality because my subject is Journalism versus Literature?—with a question mark—and I think that my own particular case can shed some light on that riddle.

Shocked

When I first went into journalism, I had already done a bit of verse and fiction and was hailed as so "promising" that my admirers were shocked to learn that I had joined the Philippines Free Press, which was a newsmagazine. They all wailed that journalism would be the death of me as a creative writer.

But I needed a good-paying writing job and I didn't have such exalted ideas of me as a "creative writer." If journalism was purely hack writing, as was the belief of the literary snobs of that time (I am speaking of the 1950s and '60s), I had this equally pretentious belief that I could create a journalism of my own, a new journalism as "creative" as any poem or novel.

And so I did reportage like the "House on Zapote Street" and "The Boy Who Wanted to Become Society."

By the way, these efforts of mine antedated the "New Journalism" in the United States—as my own "magic realism" ("May Day Eve," "The Mass of St. Sylvester," "Doña Jeronima," "Candido's Apocalypse," etc.) antedated the magic realism of the American Latinos.

Only hack writers

Anyway, my journalistic writing developed in me an understanding of writing in general. You know, actors say there are no small parts, there are only small performers. So I say: There are no hack-writing jobs, there are only hack writers. If you look down on your material, if you despise it, then you'll do a hack job.

But journalism trained me never, never to feel superior to whatever I was reporting, and always, always to respect an assignment, whether it was a basketball game, or a political campaign, or a fashion show, or a murder case, or a movie-star interview. As J.D. Salinger admonished (but this ain't a verbatim quote), I was always shining for the fat housewife in the third row.

I remember this young poet scandalized by this article I did on Nora Aunor. Wrote this young poet: "Nick Joaquin is writing about Nora Aunor! Nick Joaquin has become a bulkya writer!" But that article lives as one of the best essays on Miss Aunor because she was not bulkya to me and I did not go bulkya on her.

So that was the first vital thing I learned in journalism: that every report must be done as if you were reporting on the parting of the Red Sea, or the Battle of Pinaglabanan, or the splitting of the atom.

Good reportage is telling it as it is but at the same time telling it new, telling it surprising, telling it significant. The good reporter should become so absorbed in the story that he becomes invisible in it and the story seems to be telling itself.

Trust the tale

That is the basis of an old, old maxim: Trust the tale, not the teller.

I can claim in the Quijano de Manila reportage, you don't see Quijano de Manila at all. You see only the actual characters involved in the event that's being reported. So, as you read, that event is not just something being related to you but something happening right before your eyes.

This was the technique I learned in journalism that I brought over into literature when I began doing oral history and oral biography. I may have been the first Filipino reporter to use the tape recorder extensively. And I certainly am the first Filipino writer to use the tape recorder for literary purposes—if you are willing to grant that my essays in oral history and oral biography are literature.

I have pioneered in these two latter forms: oral history (for example: "The Quartet of the Tiger Moon") and oral biography (for example: "Doy Laurel in Profile") but, like all new inventions, these "novels" of mine have not been fully understood yet, let alone appreciated.

One lady who figured in an oral biography of mine remarked that she had expected in it more "Nick Joaquin and his insights." But that precisely is what I try to avoid: a predominance of the Nick Joaquin presence. If I am writing about, say, Doy Laurel, then I want that book to be a portrait of Doy Laurel; I do not want that book to be a portrait of Nick Joaquin as biographer.

Now that is one illustration of how journalism influenced my literary work—and influenced it for the better. The so-called creative writer tends to be too subjective, too obsessed with himself. That's why I think every aspiring young writer should spend some years as a news reporter, so he will be obliged to step out of his own private world and to experience the world outside.

This will not only train him to be observant and objective, it may also save him from eccentricity, the danger that faces every creative writer. The newsman has to report the who, what, when, where, why, and how as clearly as possible so that even people on the run can read him.

Journalism's demand

The newsman cannot afford to be eccentric.

Eccentricity is such a temptation to the creative writer because he tends to be self-indulgent. In the Philippines especially, where so few read him, he may be tempted to indulge in his fancies and foibles. He feels under no obligation to communicate clearly because he knows that his readers are mostly his own fellow writers and that he can play games with them.

But what journalism demands is responsible writing. The reporter is duty-bound to communicate—and to communicate as sensibly as possible. He must not play games with the reading public: Communication is serious business.

But too many creative writers believe that, if communication is the business of journalism, literature is different, because the business of literature is expression—or, to be more specific, self-expression. And here the responsibility is only to oneself.

That egotism is the kind of sickness that a tenure in journalism can very effectively cure.

On the other hand, the journalist is also sick who believes that he does not have to write well to produce good reportage, who actually thinks a graceful style is out of place in journalism. But if the responsibility of the writer is to communicate as clearly and sensibly as possible, then he must have a good command of expression as any creative writer.

A newsman who is careless with his grammar is being as irresponsible as a newsman who is careless with his facts. And a reporter who cannot tell a news story coherently cannot be justified by the speed and enterprise with which he got the scoop.

Cultural babel

If the creative writer needs more training in responsible communication, the news writer needs more training in fine expression, even self-expression—especially today in the Philippines, when the news writers cannot even get the gender of their pronouns right.

A breakdown in language means a breakdown in communication. Unless our news organs improve the quality of their expression, we are headed for cultural babel.

The "New Illiteracy" predicted by Marshall McLuhan may get speeded up when the reading public, in sheer disgust and despair, give up on the newspapers and turn exclusively to the electronic media.

Myself, I don't believe that the death of reading will occur within my lifetime. I think that newspapers and books will continue to be prevalent in the 21st century, in the 2000s of Anno Domini. (I'm not saying I am expecting to be still prevalent then myself!) Nor do I think that the current ungrammatical period of the Philippine press signifies merely the decay of English in this country, and not the decay of communication and expression in general.

It's the local press that shows itself irresponsible when it allows on its pages reporters who do not know how to report in correct language, copyeditors and proofreaders who do not know how to spot the errors in such reports, and editors who do not know how to edit.

As for the supposed decay of English in the Philippines, how is that possible at a time when the younger generation of Filipino writers in English is gaining recognition abroad, and Philippine English itself is being accepted in the English-speaking world as a legitimate voice in the chorus of International Englishes? And being accepted, what's more and at last, right here in the Philippines as a valid Filipino language.

I have little doubt that "Philippines 2000" will still be English during the 21st century. And I have no doubt at all that by then the alleged emulation between journalism and literature will have been resolved.

In fact, I can almost hear the referee bawling out the decision: "And the winner is... journalism!"

(To be concluded)

3 bishops doubt Comelec ready to run honest poll

From page A1

born out of our people's need to give vent to their despair and anger. We cannot allow the death of democracy."

The coalition also included officials of the National Movement for Free Elections (Namfrel), the Catholic lay community Bantalican Ateneans and the Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting.

Overwhelmed by problems related to the May 11 polls, including potentially disastrous errors in the voters' list, Bonjo yesterday urged the bishops to pray for the Commission on Elections—instead of lambasting the poll body.

"We are urging the bishops to pray for us, that we pray together ... It is prayer that will save all of us," Bonjo said.

Pray together

He added: "At this point in time, time is no longer with the Comelec. Lack of manpower and the ... serious problems of errors and discrepancies [in the voters' list] have overwhelmed our electoral officers."

Bonjo, the overall coordinator for election preparations, admitted to the lawyers that the certified voters' lists, or CVLs, would be a problem on election day.

He said the Comelec would be printing 43.5 million ballots, a one-to-one ratio of ballots to voters.

"Considering that there is a plan for electronic transmission and tracking, if the database is not accurate and the voters will access and get the wrong information, then it will create more [credibility] problems for the Comelec," he said.

"That is why we have to be very serious here ... starting from the CVL so that the CVL as uploaded [is the correct ... will be accurate and will [give] the proper information."

Bonjo said previous CVLs had "some problems" but not of the magnitude that has occurred when the Comelec tried to "centralize" it for the coming elections.

Bishop Jose Mari Gullas, a non-voting member of the Comelec, said the CVLs were generated by election officers who encoded it and made their corrections as they had control over the computers and encoding.

"There were some problems of missing names, which was usual, some inaccuracies, but not as we have seen now when the encoding was centralized," he said.

Overwhelming work

Bonjo said the poll body planned to allow election officers to generate their Election Day Computerized Voters' List, or EDCVLs, so that no one would be disenfranchised.

The plan, he said, is to provide election officers with the old 2003 CVLs, which would be added to the Book of Voters to ensure that no one is disenfranchised.

Once a voter fails to find his name in the CVL, he can try to locate it on the old list which would be provided to the board of election inspectors.

"But because of this development, the EDCVLs have to be verified before the inspectors of the (election) returns ... because (checking) of (over) 40 million voters is very serious that they have to render more than the usual call of duty," he said.

Failure to centralize

The Comelec, through its P1-billion validation project, earlier planned to come out with a centralized voters' list but the plan failed as they were only able to scrutinize data of about 28 million out of the 43.5 million voters.

"We urge the bishops not to add more to the adversary atmosphere. I think they should be the ones who should calm us with prayers and unity and faith," Bonjo said.

The church-backed anti-fraud coalition said in its statement: "We must demand full transparency from our electoral authorities. We must choose the servants of those who would steal our votes through fraudulent practices."

Archbishop Bernardo said that, "from the behavior of the campaign," it would not be impossible for cheating to occur during the elections.

He said he had been receiving "messages" expressing concern about possible massive fraud.

"Even without elections, we all know (who is) cheating," Bernardo said.

Public doubt

Socioclass head Antonio de los Reyes said one of the reasons for the coalition's existence was the public's doubt at the statements and credibility of the Comelec.

The poll body has come under fire for its failure to purge the certified voters' list of errors, such as the inclusion of dead people on the list.

This has triggered fears in opposition ranks that the poll body might be used by the administration to manipulate the elections.

"I think when these archbishops (raise) the sound of alarm, that is an indication that they do not have full trust in the electoral authorities," De los Reyes said. "Otherwise, they would not have called the alarm.

"The Comelec makes it appear that it is prepared, but I seriously doubt that the Comelec is prepared to run competent elections," De los Reyes said in a press briefing.

Henrietta de Villa, founding chair of the Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting, said electoral fraud had happened in high levels in the past, with results being tampered with during the canvass.

Quick count

Namfrel chair Jose Concepcion urged political parties to conduct their own quick counts which they could refer to if they want to question the election results.

Sorsogon Sen. Rodolfo Biazon yesterday said a former Comelec official "brazenly" offered to protect his votes in the National Capital and Southern Tagalog regions in exchange for huge sums of money—P500,000 per city and town.

The senator he would turn to shell out P8.5 million for MCR alone, said Biazon, who is running under the administration's 8-4 ticket.

Biazon, at a news conference, did not name the "influential" ex-Comelec official, saying he would divulge it concerning he was working with Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos.

The unnamed ex-official claimed to have connections within the Comelec.

Protection racket

Biazon said the "broker" made the offer to him the other day and he pretended he would think about it.

He said the deal offered him unconditional "Mafia-like protection racket."

"I will protect your votes but if you do not accept my services, I will do something about your votes," Biazon said, adding he was exposing the offer made to him because he had been a victim of the so-called "flagship bawas" fraud in the 1998 elections.

The latest opinion survey by polling outfit Pulse Asia placed Biazon just 1.3 percent off 12th place in the race for 12 Senate seats.

The other view

Pres. Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo offered a totally different view on who might cheat in the elections.

Campaigning for the President in Bagabag, Nueva Ecija, Arroyo said it was the opposition which had the motive to rig the votes and urged people to be vigilant.

"In this election, it is very clear already. There are only two who are vying for the presidency, based on the results of the last survey," he said. "But we should not be complacent because the opposition is going to cheat. Please guard your votes for Gloria." With reports from Jess Ideras Elboca, Phil Northern Luzon Bureau

SPORTS TV

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A 19

SPORTS

Editor Thaddeus S. Melendrez
Assistant Editor Edwin M. Villanueva

GUARANTEED
OUTPERFORMS
OUTLASTS

Domingo back on top; 'killer' Stage 15 today

By Mara Bradburg Reyes

BAGUIO CITY—Enrique Domingo emerged with the overall lead yesterday on his return to a place where he had twice relinquished the yellow jersey.

The 31-year old Domingo came home a gallant eighth at the end of the strength-sapping 148k stage from Nipaco to here via the Marcos Highway and regained the spot with a head-start initiative 27 seconds over Albert Pettiaro.

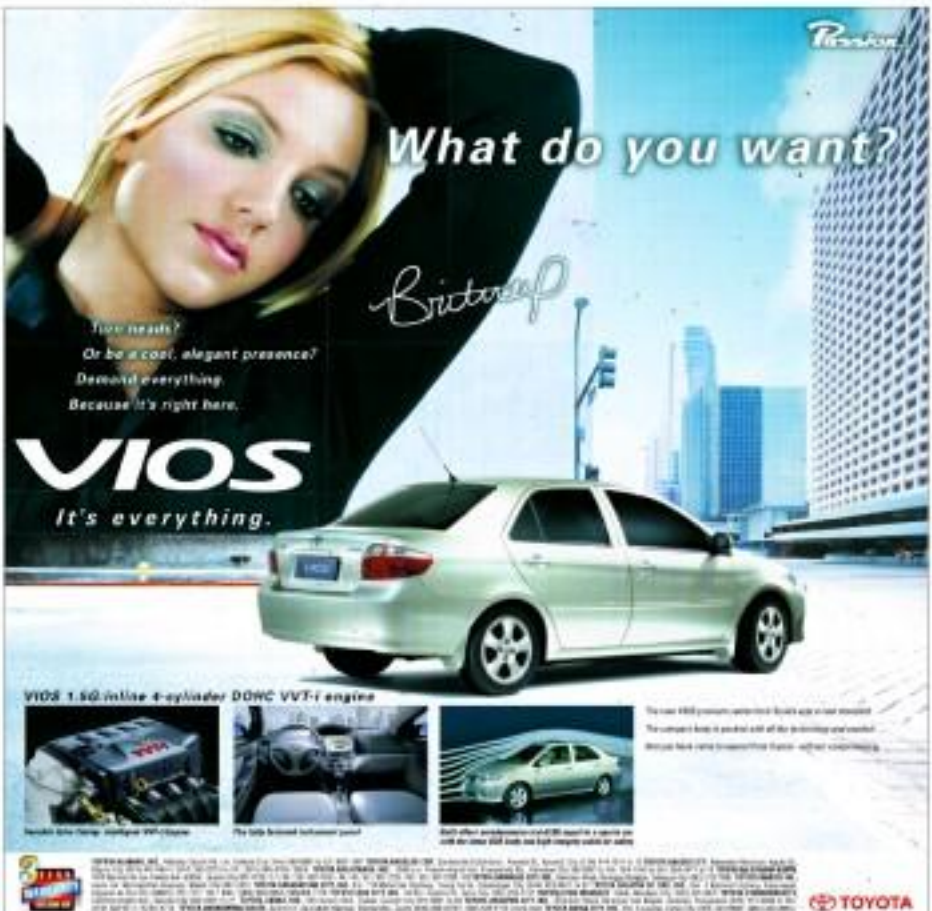
Lloyd Reynante, Domingo's assistant in the team-leading Navigators squad, completed Dole riders Michael Pettiaro and Michael Barrios to capture stage honours and move from 11th to fourth place overall behind Jose Calderon.

The son of Team legend Mauro Reynante was 27 seconds behind Calderon, who ended Domingo's 6-minutes 23 seconds.

Pious Tungcalag, who ended Domingo's five-stage hold of the overall lead in Luzong Monday, is 8 of 6:09:06-overall, 10 minutes 1 second behind, after struggling home 20th for the day.

Weakened by a cold, Tungcalag clocked in 17 minutes behind Reynante, who sided the stage

DOMINGO works his way up the tough Marcos highway enroute to Baguio City



Roco says prostate cancer recurred

Cancer cells survived 1996 Roco surgery

CANCER CELLS apparently remained inside former Sen. Raul Roco's body despite the removal of a malignant prostate gland in 1996, Jaime Zobel de Ayala Jr., a medical doctor and Roco's campaign manager, said yesterday.

Zobel de Ayala said that the cancer cells might have mixed with the blood cells during the operation," he said, explaining the fault-finding tests Roco underwent in the U.S. institute. "What caused the pain are the same cancer cells circulating in the blood."

Doctors they met in Boston and Washington, said Zobel de Ayala.

"If it were a serious, or the worst case of prostate cancer, it should have occurred in three years following the 1996 operation," he said.

The treatment Roco received in the United States belongs to the province of nano medicine, which concerns itself with microscopic organisms.

"Nano means super tiny—so tiny," said Zobel de Ayala. "They can study new microorganisms through a microscope, [but only] microscopic and [are those unseen cells]. It requires a nano enlargement, thus the need for nano medicine."

Zobel de Ayala said Roco's treatment is available only in the United States and in some different countries.

Zobel de Ayala disclosed that the medicine injected into Roco would last until May 15. When that he will be examined to determine whether the cancer is gone," he said.

In such a case, there does not need to leave the country. "It is manageable and controllable. We can order nano medicines from the US," Michael Lim Ichiong

By Christine Avendaño
Inquirer News Service

The cells caused a lesion in the pelvic bone of the Aklanon, Pag-Asa presidential candidate's doctors immediately announced it using "intelligent medicine," which sets like smart bombs, Gabriel Tan said.

He estimated the incidents to diagnose cancer that he was losing "evasive" on the third of Pag-Asa chiefs.

Roco said the medical incidents was undetectable proof that all was well with him.

Both Roco and his spokesperson Gabriel Tan addressed the medical bulletin released that the prostate cancer had returned.

It was, however, immediately detected and treated during his two-week trip bought to the United States, with the help of medicine not locally available.

"I will have no further treatment for now," Roco said, urging Filipinos to shift their attention instead to the social malaise afflicting the country.

"He just had to clear the book," Roco said, referring to the two-page medical bulletin issued by his American physicians, Dr. Larry A. Hamelehle.

"All the records of the case have been referred already to the Philippine physicians. And arrangements have been made for a regular checkup here."

Nobody asked

Commenting on news stories that he was not exactly forthright on his medical condition, Roco said: "That is not exactly true. Everything I said yesterday is true. I was not saying for somebody to ask for a new medical bulletin. Nobody asked me, as a lawyer, I do not offer to prove to anyone. It is against lawyer. Nobody asked, so nobody got."

Roco, who has slipped to fourth place in some ratings according to a recent survey by SWS Trends, stressed that he would not resort to steer sympathy from the people and to become presidential.

"The Filipino people is the ultimate judge."

The medical bulletin, as released by Roco, said:

"My patient Raul L. Roco came with complaint of pain in his back. The record shows he had surgery in April 1996 to remove completely a malignant prostate gland.

"The lengthy interval between Mr. Roco's previous problem and this less worrisome positive for a benign behavior of this problem in the future. After other tests were done, we confirm this to be. It is reasonable to expect a protracted symptom-free interval with successful management of the current complaint.

"Appropriate treatment have been submitted to Mr. Roco. Barring episodic resolution of his symptoms as he can proceed uncontrolled in the discharge of his duties as a public servant."

Unlikely to recur

Salvini Tan, a doctor himself, said: "It [the cancer] recurred, but it was immediately detected instead of too late."

He said Roco was not even undergoing a "maintenance treatment."

"It was determined he be benign, and unlikely to recur again," said Salvini Tan.

He challenged those still skeptical of Roco's illnesses "now this country" to contact the country's specialists in prostate cancer, or orthopedic surgeons, such as Drs. Jaime Montilla, Jorge Bocobo and Rita Pajarillo, and get their opinions.

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Turn to page A11

Bro. Eddie draws thousands at Ayala rally including Catholics

By Inquirer News Service

allow the rally in the country's financial district.

Wearing yellow shirts and caps, Villanueva's supporters crowded up to the Mercu Ayala Convention Center from Paseo de Roxas Ayala near but more than two hours.

Both and traffic came to a standstill in Makati as employees in the nearby buildings soon were seeing, leaving early and shouting "pagbabago" (change) and "Eddie, Eddie" were repeated.

The convoy did not show what many people think about Bro. Eddie," Bangon spokesperson Ani Lim Hizon said. "The rally will disperse on all that."

Appetizer for bigger rally

Hizon, however, said that the Ayala event was only an appetizer for a bigger rally at Luneta Park on Sunday, May 2, where more than a million supporters, according to him, are expected to attend.

"We decided to hold this rally in Makati because all public events in past republican when held in the city," Hizon said.

Ayala and Paseo de Roxas streets were closed to vehicular traffic to accommodate the supporters of Villanueva. Makati-based employees supporting Villanueva came down from their buildings at 2 p.m. to join the rally.

"We were to work in the morning and decided to take the afternoon off for this event," Ayala Avenue, a construction consultant, said.

Change

Former communist leader Satur Ocampo, widow of slain labor leader Popoy Lagman and sister of former student leader Sid Jaworski, took the stage to urge the people to support change by electing Villanueva.

"I have spent 24 years of my life in the revolution... I owed for five years, but what for. Kilusang Bayan, the Left wrote me to say edit me that what I fought for in my youth is here now... This is the leader that we have been waiting for," Lagman said.

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Turn to page A11

Catholics, Muslims

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Rodito Bernal Villanueva is former President Fidel Ramos's uncle. Ramos supported Villanueva's candidacy.

Despite Bernal Villanueva's closeness to Ramos, Pantig said he was not using his position to influence voters in favor of Villanueva.

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The Couples for Christ is a charismatic group.

Rufus Lusk—as Bryce, Couples for Christ and Lipana ng Pangkuan, was represented in the rally.

Some said Catholics shunned Villanueva's support for life and his anti-divorce stance, his anti-corruption platform and his call for religious freedom and moral renewal. He said the evangelist passed the criteria on by Manila Archbishop Gaudencio Rosales.

"Many Catholics have chosen Bro. Eddie as their preferred candidate. This is a fact that we want accepted, especially as multinational survey shows falsely across Bro. Eddie of being anti-Catholic," Ibarra said in a statement.

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Teasing Roco

Villanueva joked that his friend, former Sen. Raul Roco, who is also seeking the presidency "might want to be a statesman" for undisclosed reasons.

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Turn to page A11

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Turn to page A11

200 Edsa 3 protesters make it to Malacañang for brunch with GMA

By Inquirer News Service

Edsa III, they broke bread with President Macapagal-Arroyo to ask the palace's Government kick.

Mr. Macapagal hosted brunch for around 200 guests—common and foreign for those who Joseph Estrada, four months after he was ousted from office in January 2001.

The food consisted of bunny salad, baked macaroni, pan de sal and coffee, and the usual fare for the urban poor who made up the bulk of the tens of thousands of people who marched Mendiola.

Most of the guests were charged with rebellion but were released after they signed an oath by Mr. Macapagal adopted a policy of humanitarian compassion for her detained predecessor and his post supporters.

Seated at 20 tables, the guests ate under the gleaming wooden chandeliers in the state reception hall where state guests like Elizabeth Queen Beatrix of Holland and Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan were feted.

Manifesto

Though their leaders and most prominent members were not present, some of the guests issued a manifesto vowing not to participate in any uprising. The manifesto was presented to Mr. Macapagal at the dialogue, which was also attended by Michael Defensor, campaign spokesperson for the President.

Jaime Bautista, Mendiola Convenor, Press Secretary Milton Antiporda and anti-illegal Gen. Edgardo Aglipay were also present at the meeting after waited at 10 a.m.

"We, from different parts of Metro Manila who participated in the gathering on May 1, 2003, hereby state our aim to protest, part of the so-called historical edsa (In May 2004) that we will avoid participation in any gathering that will impede peace and progress of our country. But we will support the present administration of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and her aspirations for the good of the citizenry," read the manifesto, which was written in Tagalog.

The signatories were Elvira Ulanday, Salvador Bellaflor, Benjamin L. Garcia, Ervin M. Garcia, Redentor Ilocostos, Leonilo Hernandez, Janeth Dedace, Haven Sicuya, Helen Perez, Milagros Dulcio and Dino Estolonio.

Family

Hidalgo said she, her husband, child, as well as her mother and siblings, were among those who joined Edsa III. She said the time her group went to Malacañang on their own to express support for Mr Macapagal.

"We realized that what we did was not good although it was not our intention to hurt a violent protest," she told reporters.

Jaime Garcia, a Filipino driver, said his friends invited him to the Edsa III rally and the urge of Malacañang.

He said that when he was invited after the rally, Pampanga Gov. Lito Lapid invited him and his others and promised to help them secure their release. "That's why we agreed that we would repeat to the DSWD (Department of Social Welfare and Development) weekly [for our assistance]," he said.

Fernando Pineda became a member of Bigkis Pinoy, a party-list group supposedly formed by close friends of the President's family, and he will be getting further exact, there only as illnesses have to be treated.

Feel the condition exam?

"The answer is no," said Arquiza, quoting the 33 doctors who issued their assessment on Roco's past medical history and the fact that it surfaced eight years after the operation.

"The illness is such that it did not occur, or re-occur, as fast as it should have, if it were a serious kind of cancer," she said. "So by all indications, this is not a serious kind of illness."

Espenson said she was told that if it were a serious illness, it should have occured just three years after the operation.

"Nothing will happen in his six-year term," said Espenson, alluding to a Roco victory in the May polls.

Roco said the campaign continues and the summer heat might have contributed to the recurrence of his illness.

But through "intelligent medicine," which was programmed to locate the cancer-causing cells, a full blown recurrence of the cancer had been averted.

Mandela, too

He reiterated that he shared the same condition with former South African President Nelson Mandela. US Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry and Sens. Lauma Bondi Cortez, "and they could name no five."

Top businessmen and incumbent senators also have prostate cancer, but he refused to name names.

He said he will be willing to help fellow Filipinos who have suffering from prostate cancer. He said it was unlikely that he would die of prostate cancer, but of other causes.

Turn to page A11

Enlightened

Arroyo said the guests "have been enlightened and they have seen that the President is doing what is right for the country."

"They were very much against the administration before but now they have pledged their support for the President because they know that the President is very sincere in pushing through with her pro-poor agenda," presidential spokesperson Ignacio Bunye said.

Asked why the leaders of the ousted on Malacañang did not come, Bunye said: "Those are the ordinary people who formed the bulk

Turn to page A11

Palace doors open

Bunye defended the people who are herded into Malacañang supposedly to be given a tour of the Palace but are also given campaign t-shirts and caps of the President.

"Every day hundreds of people from different parts of the country are taken to Kalayaan Hall where they get to listen to the President's campaign jingles. Concerts serve the reason because, lunch or dinner depending on the time of day.

Bunye said this was part of the President's policy to open the Palace to the people.

Turn to page A11

Women swoon, men wish they could do opera

By Inquirer News Service

Whitney Houston, among artists he would be interested to work with. Bocelli is specially effective in duets with women, as was evident in his collaboration with Sarah Brightman ("Time to Say Goodbye," a re-recording of "Con Te Partiro") and Celine Dion ("The Prayer").

Discovered by Pavarotti

Young soprano Maria Lolgin Bocelli is also performing tonight, and her duet w/Bocelli hits with the heartthrob tenor should be something to look forward to. Maestro Pavarotti discovered the Italian superstar Andrea Bocelli when he was in his early 30s.

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Turn to page A11

Erratum

IN THE STORY headlined, Mendiola, mother of the suicidal suspect, "A Matter of Claim," which appeared in yesterday's issue of the Inquirer, Democrat Party-List was erroneously reported as running for reelection as Mindanao representative. It is not. His brother Lito Pinto is running for reelection as Ilocos Norte governor. The Inquirer regrets the error.

Prodigious Sy wows field in Asian F3

SIXTEEN-YEAR-OLD Tyson Sy lived up to his reputation as the new "wonder boy" of Philippine motorsports when he became the winningest driver last weekend at the Batangas Racing Circuit.

The young Filipino driver first topped rounds one and two of the Formula Toyota Cup by handily beating the the field driving identical San Damiano RP96 formula cars powered by 1600cc Toyota engines.

Sy, who drives for former Nationale Toyota chump Edgen Dy Liacco's Edgesports organization and is sponsored by San Miguel Corp., Cobra Interlube Racing, Diamond Motorsports, A-Toy Body Kits and DP Custom Paints, thrilled the capacity crowd by engaging lady driver and fellow Formula BMW campaigner Gabby de la Hoz and his dad DP for the final before finally finding a way through and building up an insurmountable lead in both races.

Sy next showed his mettle in the first leg of the Asian Formula 3 Series, where he was the first Nationale Class driver home in both rounds.

WONDERKID Sy celebrates on the podium

In the first race, he jumped from fifth to third at the start and then wasted no time in overtaking Japan's Kohei Okabe and Singapore's Jordi Chua to finish behind Malaysian Fairuz Fauzy.

He performance was all the more amazing since he was driving with a strained muscle in his left arm all weekend.

"Tyson could turn out to be the best driver our country has ever produced," Dy Liacco said. "He has natural talent, focus and knows what he needs to attain his goals."

"Tyson is driving extremely well. He's only 16 and he will surely go a long way," said Mitarchi Team Asia director Mauli Goddard, who manages Sy in the Asian Formula 3 and Formula BMW Series.

Despite all the success, Sy remained humble and shy. "I'm really happy that I'm racing for two great outfits, who are helping me learn and progress in my career," Sy said. "I want to be able to win a lot of races for my teams and sponsors and, of the many wins, enjoy racing."

Domingo back on top; 'killer' Baguio stage today

From page B-1

with a time of five hours, 53 minutes and 29 seconds for his second lap win.

"So on again ang karaboan ko ang mga ako sa race. (This could be the sign I've been waiting from above)," said Domingo of his unexpected resurgence on a course that had given him nothing but heartbreak in the past.

But he still has to survive today's "killer" of a stage to lay claim on his first Lakbayan title since 1988.

The flagoff in Baguio 15th lap starts with a perilous descent through Marcos Highway followed by a climb through Kapalaran Road. After another plunge down Marcos Highway, the field saddles the mauling stretch of Kennon Road on the way to the finish at Burnham Park.

Domingo, known for his spine-tingling skills more than anything else, held the overall lead going into the Baguio leg last year but lost it to Israel Quintero, who went on to capture the championship.

In 1996, Domingo lost a 11-minute lead to eventual champion Victor Espiritu in the same stage.

Ironically, the winner of last year's Baguio leg, Placido Valdez, became the seventh rider to abandon the race due to exhaustion.

"I went here to guard the climbers. I'll make my move in the **extended runs and flat roads**," said Domingo, adding he was assured of full support by his teammates at the last the Chef'S,000.00 champ's pause.

With only three laps left, the Pedalmet remained solidly ahead in the race by the 31-second gap separating him from Pogi, who trailed Pedmet by 21 minutes 30 seconds while opening a 20-minute edge over Steve in Beer.

Domingo won with Quirimit and Reynante in the 33-man lead pack in Pogo that held an 11-minute edge over the 31-second gap separated at six riders, including Espiritu, 1996 champ Warren Dewahlla and first stage winner Felix Celeste.

Left way behind were frontrunners Tanjuding, Albert Pelayo and Frederick Pelicano in the big eight group, 17:40 off the pace.

But the lead pack slowly thinned out due to the long, hard climb before Reynante, Ramos, Michael Pelayo and Quirimit pulled away in the cliffside tunnel and bridge some 10 feet to the finish line.

SLR nips Red Bull in thriller

By Marong Castillo, Contributor

BAWAG—Sta. Lucia backed guest Jeet Jesse shooting in the stretch last night, holding on to a 98-97 victory over Red Bull in a PBA Great Manador Pessa Conference road game at the covered-ban BSIC gym here.

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The Realtors, who blew a six-point lead after stunning four shooters in the last 34 seconds, got back on track after being demoralized by idle San Miguel on Sunday.

Sta. Lucia improved to 3-5, while the Thunder lost for the second time in one week to be at 6-6.

The game was tight, save for the first period when the Realtors (nailed by shooters in eight as Nic Belmonte got little support from the bench. Gerard Francisco then came in to provide help.

The Realtors even took a five-point lead in the second quarter with Francisco scraping nine points.

Red Bull had two golden chances to turn the contest around, but Jimmy Torres and Casey Hightower flubbed potential game-winning plays inside the final 14 seconds.

ALL Push of Alaska finds the lane blocked by Asi Taulava of Talk 'N Text in the two teams' game Wednesday. Alaska won, 102-95.

Unwavering support cited by fallen champ

BACOLOD—Arriving in this sweet and chilly mountain capital, Tuesday Rhum captain Ariel Quintero knows that the 2nd Tour Filipinas 2004 will just be a footnote in his career.

A footnote he'd rather forget, since he one very important thing.

"I would just like to thank Tuesday for all the support it has extended to the team and myself," said the disgraced individual champion in PE game. "I have seen seen such tolerance and support in a sponsor."

In a show display of "Celebrating the Filipino Spirit," the throng of Tuesday's 100th Anniversary celebration this year, the team has rallied Quintero's misfortunes in the early stages and remained fighting.

From mid-pack Wednesday Tuesday is now in sixth overall, thanks to a fourth place finish by Quintero yesterday that vaulted the team to third for the stage.

"It's all about the sports and competitiveness of about, you keep on fighting no matter what," said Lacey Li, Tuesday's advertising manager who personally takes care of the team.

Li said the entire Tuesday organization will never give up on Quintero and the Rhum Riders even when they were 12th and last in the team event after their captain got struck by the flu and conceded defeat after Stage 3.

"This race was a learning experience for all of us and it will make us a better team next year," added Li.

Ho outlasts foe, gains Toby's q'finals

DEVI SISO memoir Tan Ho outlasted Jamal Al-Mindy 7-5, 7-6 (3), yesterday to reach the Ecuador quarterfinals of the Toby's Philo Junior Championships at the Rizal Memorial Tennis Center.

Jasmine, 9, an incoming grade 3 student at the Immaculate Conception Academy and younger sister of World Junior Championships campaigner Andrea, will meet sixth seed Chao Tzu-Hsiang, who stunned a 6-2, 6-3 victory over Meiko Timpano. Also advancing were Daniel Luis Macabitas Bernardino Sino, Jacob Lagmoso, Tito Pobers, Jonas Pena and Kim Peñaco.

In the boys' 12-under, Joseph Balbin-ado defeated Tito Pobers, 7-6 (2), 6-2, to forge a quarterfinal duel with seventh seed Alberto Villaroy, who beat No. 10 Jacob Lagmoso, 6-1, 7-6 (4). Other winners were Mike Han Ong, Ely Kim Ivan Serana, Bernardino Sino, Juan Gabriel Pena, Kyle Cordero and Leander Lucero.

In the boys' 14-under, No. 6 Mark Reiko won over third seeder Sino, 6-7 (4), 6-3, 6-4, and Mike Ely upset No. 7 Julius Lagmoso, 6-3, 6-0, 6-3.

STAGE 14 RESULTS

SEOUL SHOWDOWN: South Korean boxing promoter Lee Ki Sung, Games and Amusements Board chair Eduardo Villanueva and sportsman Rudy Salud (second left to right) sign the fight promotion contract between Filipino fighter Z Gorres and Korean Kil Yu Chol in his bid in Seoul on May 22. Looking on are (standing, same order) Myung Park Soon, GAB commissioner Angel Sumbilla, TSG-Cool, George Alcantara and GAB boxing chief Nick Flores. Salud is manager of Gorres.

SUERTRES 2 1 6
SIX DIGIT 9 4 6 1 7 6

METRO
Editor Abelardo S. Manalay

SUPERLOTTO 6/49 12 16 32 38 47 48

3,000 cops to watch over May 1 rites

By Leila B. Salaverria and Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

OVER 3,000 policemen would be deployed in Metro Manila tomorrow as part of the Super Task Force for Kampanyang Ayusan by the National Capital Region Police Office for the May 1 rallies.

NCRPO Director Alarado de Leon said they will be under full alert status starting today. But he added they were not expecting huge rallies tomorrow.

"We don't expect much activities. But we are ready just the same," he added.

De Leon said the CIT for Kampanyang, which he himself would head, would be composed of six other task forces taking care of security in critical areas in the metropolis.

Five of the task forces are composed of teams from the Western, Central, Eastern, Southern and Northern Police Districts, while the sixth is the Task Force Reserve and would be composed of teams that would be called upon to augment the police force when needed.

De Leon met with the directors of the five police districts yesterday to assess the security preparations for tomorrow.

Though the anti-President Macapagal-Arroyo rally earlier planned for May 1 had been scrapped, a militant labor group has promised to mobilize at least 50,000 people on May 1 to push for a wage increase.

Kilusang Mayo Uno national chair Elmer Labog told the Inquirer the other day that they would organize a huge rally in Liwasang Bonifacio with their members and supportive marching from different assembly points in the metropolis starting at 9 a.m.

Other labor organizations and local government units are expected to hold activities tomorrow but Southern Police District Director Marcelino Franco said there would be labor-oriented.

De Leon also said that aside from monitoring the influx of militant, labor and possible political groups on Labor Day, the police will also be on the lookout for terrorist threats.

"In our scenarios, we have extended our (protection) to include terrorist scenarios," he said, adding the police will also be securing critical infrastructures.

The vital installations being carefully monitored in Metro Manila are the Clotes Boco Bridge, Liwasang Bonifacio, Pandacan oil depot and United States Embassy in Manila, Ayala in Quezon City and Pasig, and the World Trade Center in Pasay City.

Police would also be deployed in Cubao, Mandaluyong and in front of the University of Santo Tomas, which are all common rallies points, please see Collaso.

Meanwhile, MPD director Chief Supt. Avelino Razon said yesterday that the MPD is keeping up its 24-hour checkpoints and it also closely coordinating with barangay officials as part of the effort to keep Manila victorious-free during the elections.

Eusebio refutes claim on padded Pasig voters' list

By Luige del Puerto and Jaime Aberan

FORMER Mayor Vicente "Tiboy" Eusebio laughed off as nonsense that his camp and the Commission on Elections conspired to pad the city voters' list by as much as 150,000.

Comelec Officer Romeo Alcazar also defended his office against the allegations.

"It's a laughing," Eusebio said in a press conference yesterday referring to congressional candidate Robert "Dodot" Jaworski of the Lakas-Christian and Muslim Democrats.

Jaworski and Rep. Henry Lanot, who is running for mayor, want the Comelec to first "clean up" the voters' list of the city before holding the elections.

Eusebio is running against Lanot.

Speaking beside her husband, Mayor Soledad Eusebio said the rise of the number of voters is not "numerically improbable."

The 2000 census, the statistics Jaworski used, does not accurately reflect figures because it is true only five years ago, she argued.

"How many 14-year-olds have now turned 19? The city has many migrants (because they) saw that the economic climate here is good," she said.

Comelec records showed around 350,000 voters have either registered or transferred to the city for the May 10 polls, jacking up the number of voters from 300,000 last elections to 400,000 this year.

In a phone interview, Alcazar said although his office is located at the City Hall, "local officials are not influencing us." He said there are no legal and logical bases to delay the elections.

Caloocan bets agree on Comelec control

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

NOW THEY have one thing to agree on.

With only two weeks left before election day, political rivals in Caloocan City have separately proposed that the area be put under Commission on Elections control amid increased political tension in the city.

Rep. Enrico Echiverri has asked the Comelec to put the entire city under strict control, while Mayor Boy Malonzo submitted a letter two days ago proposing Comelec control over several barangays in the city.

Former mayor Macario Asistio Jr. told the Inquirer he was willing to support the call for Comelec control over the city.

Aside from strict monitoring, areas under Comelec control will have their police forces directly under the lead Comelec.

Asistio, Echiverri, Rep. Edgar Erice and Malonzo's wife Cielo are running for mayor. In the past few weeks, their camps had traded allegations of harassment.

RITES OF SUMMER
A young boy lies out muffled cries of pain during his circumcision Thursday at the Bosco compound in Tondo, Manila. Over 100 boys underwent the annual summer operation sponsored by SPIN 7 and private medical groups. (BEA ALONZO)

Culiat folk hit cop raid

By Christian Esguerra and Michael Joebert I. Navales

RESIDENTS of the Muslim community in Culiat, Quezon City, ran up in arms following last Wednesday's raid that arrested 12 alleged Abu Sayyaf terrorists.

One of the suspects, Hamdi Ben Abi Hindana, is a respected leader in the community and a campaign officer of vice-presidential candidate Sen. Noli de Castro, they claimed.

"My father is an investor," Maulana's daughter, Ebeng, told the Inquirer in an interview.

The Teatro Bangsamoro party list group yesterday released a dossier of Maulana, claiming he is also the group's coordinator in Luzon and an official of Quezon City Mayor Sonny Belmonte's Muslim Consultative Council.

"As far as we're concerned, he's a good man," Imam representative Samrah Ali Limam said.

The military on Wednesday claimed an arms cache, including a big amount of explosives, were found in the house of Maulana and 11 other Culiat residents.

The daughter said the could not have been as since there were babies in the house. "We use it for eight mini-rounds each bombs in that place."

Maulana's son, Vimar, had executed an affidavit, alleging that the items supposedly found in his father's possession had in fact been planted.

But police and the military maintained that the raid was legitimate operation.

Lt. Col. David Lazaro, military information officer, said they have sufficient evidence to prove that Maulana, Tadik Mandin Udalo and Arnad Inkuman abdurhadi were involved Abu Sayyaf men.

Police yesterday charged Maulana with illegal possession of explosives and illegal importation the Quezon City prosecutor's office.

The rest of the suspects were still being investigated on.

Bet's car shot at, but cops find no proof

By Luige del Puerto

THE SHIELD of congressional candidate Josefina Gatchalian, wife of incumbent Antipolo Mayor Angelito Gatchalian, was allegedly shot at on Wednesday night, the mayor's camp claimed yesterday.

Mrs. Gatchalian is running for a seat in Congress.

But the police found no slug nor spent shell in the vehicle or in the immediate surrounding.

The police also said bystanders did not hear a gunfire nor see armed men at the time the incident reportedly took place.

"We scoured the area and found no slug or spent shell. Residents also did not hear a gunfire," a desk officer said, quoting the report of investigator PO3 Danny Tamadlao.

Residents in the area interviewed on TV also said they did not hear a gunfire.

A statement released by the mayor's office said Mrs. Gatchalian was not inside the vehicle, a Nissan Patrol with plate No. NSB 725, when the alleged shooting occurred. The vehicle bore a one-inch hole at the rear windshield on the left side, police said.

Cager's wife asks court to legalize separation

By Tina Santos

THE WIFE of fmr. Gilas pro basketball team player Bonnerk Harrendes has asked the Quezon City Regional Trial Court to legalize their separation due to the cager's alleged grossly abusive conduct and infidelity.

In a petition for legal separation, Teresa Ostrendes, of Richland Street, Loyola Grand Villas, Quezon City, also asked the court to order her husband to provide P250,000 as monthly support for her and their three children, and to pay for their children's needs and their conjugal debts.

Mrs. Ostrendes also asked the court for the sole custody of their children, to dissolve the absolute community of their property and order the forfeiture of the respondent's share in the say profits in favor of the children.

The petitioner claimed that she and her husband frequently quarreled over the player's illegal activities and grossly abusive conduct toward her.

Mrs. Ostrendes said she informed respondent regarding her husband's affairs with different women, thinking them to be harmless flings, more because of husband's nature as a professional basketballplayer.

Court records showed that the petitioner and Bonnerk, who is also known as "Captain Marvel" of the Philippine Basketball Association, were married before then QC RTC Judge Lucas Bersamin on Aug. 13, 1996.

The heiress tried but failed to reach the respondent for comment.

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Lakers advance, meet Spurs next

LOS ANGELES—Kobe Bryant flew in after a day in a Colorado court and once again showed no ill-effects on the basketball court Wednesday as the Los Angeles Lakers beat Houston, 97-78, to reach the second round of the National Basketball Association playoffs.

Bryant had 31 points and 10 assists and the Lakers advanced for the eighth straight year to the Western Conference semifinals.

The second-seeded Lakers closed out the seventh-seeded Rockets in five games to set up an epic rematch with the defending NBA champion San Antonio Spurs, who ended Los Angeles' three-year title reign in last year's conference semifinals.

"This time we're ready for them," said Lakers coach Phil Jackson, although he added: "They're playing as good as anybody in the NBA right now. We're going to have to elevate our game." That series starts Sunday, which certainly should benefit Bryant. Since Sunday's overtime win in Houston, he has flown to Colorado and back to Los Angeles for three straight days of pre-trial hearings. The Lakers star is facing a rape charge in Colorado.

Bryant arrived less than a half-hour before tip-off and appeared fatigued early in the game. But he got a second wind in the second quarter, scoring 14 points, then matched Houston's total - nine - in the third period.

"It took me a while to get my legs underneath me," Bryant said. "Once I got up and down the court a couple of times I was able to find my rhythm." The superstar guard was rubbing his eyes in the third quarter, which the Rockets may have been doing in disbelief. They endured their second nine-point quarter of the series and went down meekly in their first postseason appearance in five years.

Malone had another solid game with 18 points for the Lakers, who have reached the conference semifinals every year since 1997—when Bryant and superstar center Shaquille O'Neal first became teammates.

Jimmy Jackson scored 17 points and Cuttino Mobley and Steve Francis added 16 each for the Rockets, who committed 22 turnovers. All-Star center Yao Ming managed just 10 points.

Bryant had some trouble in the first quarter staying with Mobley. *AFP*

LAKERS' O'Neal (right) dunks over Rockets' Ming during Game 5 of the NBA Western Conference playoffs. REUTERS

Pacers wait for next foe

INDIANAPOLIS—Indiana Pacers forward Jermaine O'Neal has a rebuttal to those who say having an extended break between playoff series is a good thing.

"I've just realized this week how bad television really is," O'Neal said. "I have to get back to work."

The Pacers, who swept Boston to move into the second round, will have to wait at least a week to find out which between New Orleans and Miami it faces next. *AP*

RACING TIPS

AT SANTA ANA BY MR. 999

Race 1--1. Sweet Inspiration 2. Miraculous Star 3. Socialite 4. Currency 5. Ongbee

Race 2--1. Five O'Clock'l Don't Dance 2. Gifted Gal 3. Black Hawk

Race 3--1. Queen of Gaia 2. My Lucky One 3. Ponchito 4. Frost Bite

Race 4--1. Material Trick 2. Do It David 3. Spoiler 4. Serendipity 5. Headliner/Nagmamahal

Race 5--1. Crystal City 2. Kokopelli 3. Queen Matawe 4. Day Break

Race 6--1. Blue Iris 2. Gabriela 3. Morning Glory 4. Tiger Winnie 5. Gleaming Heart

Race 7--1. Art of Rose 2. Wear the Fox Hat 3. Pacific Storm 4. Queen of Diamonds 5. Miami Belle

Race 8--1. Wing Away 2. Ocean Wings 3. Johann Song 4. Fantasia 5. Diamond Sky 6. Red Lips

BUSINESS

Editor Raul G. Morales
Assistant Editor Carlos S. Narisma

Peso slides back to 56-$1 level

THE PESO yesterday slid back to the 56-to-$1 level on month-end corporate demand and weak regional markets, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas said.

The US dollar, rallying on a favorable economic outlook shot by positive economic data and expectations of interest rate tightening by the US Federal Reserve, pounded Asian currencies.

"The peso is weaker on dollar short covering by banks following the 'Fed hold's bill,' and BSP Deputy Governor Amando Tetangco said.

Tetangco noted that the baht had fallen to 40-to-$1 for the first time in one year.

"Corporate demand from oil and pharmaceutical companies also exerted pressure on the peso," Tetangco said.

(more in...)

DESPITE U.S. FED PLAN

BSP to keep key rates steady

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE BANGKO Sentral ng Pilipinas said it would resist pressure to raise its key policy rates, despite the expected increase in the US Federal Reserve rates, for as long as the inflation rate remained below 5 percent.

In an interview, BSP Deputy Governor Amando Tetangco said the local monetary authorities would not necessarily follow the expected moves of the US Fed.

Last week, US Fed Chief Alan Greenspan said that a long period of disinflation was now and that the institution was aware of the need to increase rates. He, however, refused to divulge the timing of any rate adjustment.

"The expectation is that the US Fed will make upward adjustments in interest rates," Tetangco said in an interview.

"On our part, we have to look at the inflation rate. Under the inflation targeting system, we have to compare inflation with the forecast," he said.

As such, he said that for as long as the annual inflation rate stayed within the government's 4-5 percent target for this year, the BSP would maintain its current policy rates.

To date, the market believes that interest rates in the US, currently at 45-year lows, had bottomed out, triggering sharp gains by the US dollar against other currencies.

The US dollar's rally came after the US reported a higher than expected March job expansion figure, followed by stronger than expected inflation.

The peso has likewise rebounded in April after falling to record lows against the US dollar in March.

Chairing the Monetary Board's monthly (more in...)

1983 revisited

BALS, Roces was trying to protect himself as another Nimoy inquiry during his homecoming Wednesday wearing a yellow shirt and wearing sizing blocks shorter so comfort stored on his motorcade.

Strange hijacking of the Erlas I have, since in 1983, to Nimoy returned on Manila to be assassinated, Roces had his hands full traversing for Aquia, the corporate counsel of the Marcos-crony firms.

Roces was, in fact, head of Arroyo's litigation department at that time, with the rank of co-managing partner.

His major accounts included San Miguel Corp.

Roces, according to one of his colleagues, was the legal architect of former Ambassador Edgardo Cojuangco Jr.'s takeover of the country's biggest food, beverage, and packaging conglomerate.

Why the SEC has now chosen his former counsel and boss the Roces law firm, instead of Aquia, because the pure Erlas is counsel of San Miguel are most legal legends worthy of a Ricardo Manapat exposé.

In his several statements, Roces also alluded to the mysterious witness as something like alias alias John Sorry, the Democratic presidential candidate against ex-electorate US President George W Bush.

COCKTALES

30-stage role model for retirees who continues to dodge questions about his illness.

Roces hailed as the "justice best for early detection," had the courage and the forthrightness to post on his and other owners websites the identities of his doctors, the hospital where the US presidential aspirant was to be and had actually been confined—Johns Hopkins—as well as the graphic details of his surgery and post-surgery protocol.

Roces, of course, is no Kerry. And this, of course, is the Philippines.

Pilot turnaround

PCIBL, the publicly listed cell phone company of the FLIT Group, turned the press from an October annual meeting.

The journalists were unusually steaming, since PLDT chair Manuel V Pangilinan had just delivered a speech, dreadfully reprimand the major decline, about the need for increased transparency and higher standards of corporate governance among the listed companies.

The Pilot meeting, incidentally, was held at the Metro Institute of Management, built at the time from of the USAID's Agile-funded program for increased supervisory and accounting standards of Philippine Inc.

PCIBL Smart spokesman Ramon Isberto, himself an ex-journalist, was apologetic to his former colleagues, but cancelled, rightly so, that the press have no legal right to attend the annual meeting, unless they themselves are listed shareholders.

To make a long story short, there was a happy ending to this short saga.

Filed date Napoleon Sarmiento, who met and pleased the nonviolent press after the shareholders' meeting, treated the chocolate to six VAO hotel rooms—but that he said he was unaware of.

In any case, the new board, more than Pilot had become a hot and sexy stock again, yesterday unanimously voted to lift the ban.

Inequitable rule

EQUITABLE PCIBank corporate secretary Felix Ortiz claimed that the nominees of Lazaro Jimmy Ty had been disqualified and could not be elected directors in last week's stockholders' meeting because the four were not registered shareholders as of Jan. 31, 2004.

After the shareholders' meeting, EPCIB added two more directors, former Trade and Industry Secretary Cesar Bautista and Ramon Jabar of the Social Security System, to comply with the independent representative rule.

EPCIB later disclosed that Sarmiento and Jabar acquired their qualifying shares only last April 23.

Heard through the grapevine

BANKKADO Sumwatch "Baby" Severo awarded the automobile sponsorship of the Andrea Bocelli concert in Japan, despite the last-minute lobbying for BMW by no less than the Institute ambassador himself.

So tonight, the blind tenor arias will be first in the drama. Columns in a platinum XJR, the Rh 5-million Jag model whose lucky few owners include Xiaibo Ubaldo and Silvestre Lapaz.

(Email cocktales@yahoo.com or mobile_pal@hotmail.com.)

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Garments exports down 2.9%

By Ronnel W. Domingo

GARMENTS and textile exports in the first quarter declined by 2.9 percent to $694.18 million from $714.74 million in the same period last year.

According to officials of the Garments and Textile Export Board, the slowdown was due to the continued decline in exports to the United States—the country's largest market.

GTEB data showed that from January to February exports of apparel went down by 6.54 percent; non-apparel, 16 percent and textiles 17.67 percent.

Non-apparel items include bags and shoes with textile components, towels and bedsheets.

Apparel comprised 67.7 percent of exports, non-apparels 6.6 percent and textiles 5.5 percent.

Exports to the US went down by 8.13 percent to $466.34 million from $649.73 million in the same period last year.

The decline was largely triggered by the shrinking of non-apparel exports to the US by 30 percent.

In the first quarter, apparel exports to the US also went down by 5.7 percent while textile exports slid by 12.4 percent.

At the same time, receipts from shipments to the European Union rose by 24 percent to $106.3 million from the year-ago figure of $85.65 million.

The top three destinations of garments and textile exports to the EU during the first quarter were Great Britain, Germany and the Benelux countries (Belgium, The Netherlands and Luxembourg), respectively.

Together, these countries accounted for 73.4 percent of exports to the EU worth some $77 million.

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SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM

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BSP . . .

From page B1

ty policy rate setting in April, key rates were kept at 6.75 percent for the overnight borrowing or reverse repurchase and 9 percent for the overnight lending or repurchase rate. The BSP's policy rates were last adjusted in July last year when the rates were cut by 25 basis points.

In March, the country's inflation rate eased at 3.8 percent but the BSP expected this to rise to 5.9 percent in April alongside the increases in fuel and transport fare prices.

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200,000 - 400,000	5.50	5.75	5.75	6.00	7.00
500,000 - 999,000	6.00	6.25	6.50	6.50	8.00
1,000,000 - 4,999,999	7.75	7.75	7.75	7.75	8.00
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ABS-CBN embarks on expansion of cable TV operations in Asia

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

TELEVISION giant ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp. is positioning itself to be a major player in the Asian region in the next four years as it readies plans to expand its cable businesses in Singapore, Hong Kong and Taiwan.

ABS-CBN chair and chief executive officer Eugenio L. Lopez III said the company was already in talks with major cable operators in these countries for possible joint ventures.

"We expect that in the next six to 12 months, we will already be in those countries," Lopez said.

"In the next five years, we think there will be broadcasters, new big players on a regional basis. We want to be one of those players," Lopez also said following the company's stockholders's meeting yesterday.

Lopez said ABS-CBN was expecting first quarter earnings to grow by 10 percent, driven mainly by overseas business operations managed by ABS-CBN Global.

Lopez said contributions of political ads in the first quarter was not yet significant.

First quarter 2003 earnings were placed at P1.07 million.

ABS-CBN Global's net sales increased by 16 percent to P2.27 billion as of mid-December last year from P1.92 billion in 2002, largely from subscription revenues of its cable and direct-to-home services with total viewers of 1.3 million by end of 2003.

ABS-CBN vice president and chief operating officer Rodolph Interlandi said the company was expecting ABS-CBN Global to break even this year with revenue still outpaced by start-up operations in some areas, including Europe.

Interlandi said pre-operating losses for ABS-CBN Europe would be P-400 million this year. The unit was launched only last December.

The gross revenue of its international operations, largely from new cable subscriptions, was estimated to have grown by 40 percent during the first quarter this year, Lopez said.

Lopez said ABS-CBN plans to list ABS-CBN Global in the Stock Exchange of Singapore within the next two to three years.

"Our view is corporate advertising is not a significant player going forward as against the total cake. The target impetus for growth internationally is retail subscription, whether good times or bad times, the cash flow is very good," Lopez said.

Smart rules out merger with Piltel

By Clarissa S. Batino

SMART Communications Inc. yesterday ruled out public listing, merger with Pilipino Telephone Corp. and backdoor listing through Piltel as options in meeting ownership in its franchise.

Smart president Napoleon Nazareno said the company was looking at various alternatives so that the country's largest mobile phone firm would not have to comply with the franchise requirement of selling 20 percent of its equity to the public or to telcos August 2004.

"We have to seek a deferment of our IPO. There may be provisions we could pursue and we are looking at various options," said Nazareno, however, refused to elaborate on it.

Another issue is said that Smart was not just looking to defer the initial public offering scheduled by its franchise but to permanently avoid public listing.

Smart is a 100 percent owned by Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co., which is already a listed company. The profitable wireless firm would eventually own more than 90 percent of Piltel which is also listed.

The Philippine Stock Exchange has a rule against cross listing, where listed companies are prohibited from listing their subsidiaries. Smart would transfer the PSE policy in meeting the franchise requirement.

A lawyer, however, said that Smart's franchise, being law, could only be superseded by another law.

"The only way Smart could avoid listing is if it could convince Congress to amend its franchise before August. Otherwise, Smart would be in violation of its franchise which is a law. And this is a ground for being dismissed indeed," said a lawyer.

Nazareno who is also president of PLDT categorically ruled out any merger between Smart and Pilyitco a backdoor listing through Piltel.

He admitted that it would be more beneficial for Smart to train Piltel as a separate unit even if Smart would eventually acquire PLDT's 82 percent stake in the listing phone subsidiary.

Piltel expects big cut in losses

PILTEL Telephone Corp. expects its losses in the first quarter to decline substantially from P360.2 million in the previous year, as its subscriber base grew to more than three million during the period, according to company chief Napoleon Nazareno.

The annual first quarter numbers will be released May 15.

Nazareno said the company's performance in the first three months was on track with its goal of returning to profitability this year after incurring billions of pesos in losses in the last seven years. Piltel is expecting to post a net income of P400 million by the end of this year.

"The first quarter performance was favorable in terms of financial results largely due to subscribers base take-up. All indicators showed good results," Nazareno told reporters following the company's stockholders' meeting yesterday.

Talk 'N Text subscribers stood at 2.88 million as of mid-2003.

Subscribers of prepaidie store Smart Communications Inc. reached 30.06 million last year.

"Talk 'N Text subscribers have reached almost 4 million by the end of the first quarter from 1.37 million a year ago. The subscriber take-up was due to the success of the Buy Load," said a Piltel official.

Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. owns about 51 percent of Piltel but Smart Communications Inc. said it would acquire PLDT's stake in Piltel in exchange for its debt worth P36 billion.

Petron plans $150-M loan

PETRON Corp., the largest oil refiner in the country, yesterday said it was planning to borrow $150 million to upgrade its plant and for its other capital spending.

In a disclosure to the stock exchange, Petron said its board had authorized the loan to partly fund the construction of an isomerization unit and a gas oil hydrotreater.

Last year, Petron started a $100-million project to produce cleaner fuel to comply with a new law that requires refiners to bring down the sulphur content of automotive diesel from 0.20 percent to 0.05 percent as of the January.

At its 180,000 barrel per day refinery in Bataan, Petron started building an isomerization unit to enable the company to increase the content of its gasoline products and a hydrotreater unit to reduce sulphur content.

Both projects are due to come on stream by early 2005. In the meantime, Petron is preparing whatever cleaner fuel it cannot produce itself. *Reuters*

Diethelm, Aboitiz One expand partnership

DIETHELM (Philippines) Inc. (DPI), one of the leading distributors of pharmaceutical and consumer healthcare products in the Philippines, has expanded its strategic distribution partnership with Filipino conglomerate Aboitiz One to include new clients such as Hunterdouk Philippines and Ideal Advocate.

DPI is the local unit of DKSH, which is headquartered in Zurich, Switzerland. DKSH is the number one marketing and service group in Asia, in terms of sales and number of employees.

Dietlarin Flohr, VP for operations Larry Williams and Aboitiz One's Distributor and Base (D&E) services, being supported by their fleet of segregated delivery vans, fulfilled the requirements of perishable products that are being distributed by the company such as H&H chocolates from Hunterdouk.

Hunterdouk Philippines is a subsidiary of Hunter Inc., a global leader in confectionery and private label businesses. Ideal Advocate is a division of United Myers Liquids that manufactures Ideal Sorbetta.

"The Aboitiz D&E team has helped us grow our business substantially. They do this through their nationwide coverage to all areas of the Philippines from the very north to the very south," Williams noted.

D&E is supported by a fleet of 11 aircraft, 20 sea vessels and more than a thousand vehicles from prime movers and trailer trucks to multi-axles and motorcycles, providing direct the flexibility of moving cargo to any location.

"They have helped us reach 7,000 customers to date, all the time. They have helped us through their reliability, through their advanced systems, and their customer service perspective," Williams added.

Stocks down 1.76%

Infotech and agriculture revolution

By Brenda M. Ordinez

I MUST commend Agriculture Secretary Luis Lorenzo and his team for their excellent work in transferring hybrid and cyrofibrin technology for the benefit of thousands of farmers.

Earlier this week, I witnessed an equally commendable effort as technology transfer — by a private sector individual, Mr. Roberto Brenda. He explained the System Rice Intensification (SRI) technology to leaders of the Federation Budget and numerous rural agriculturists led by Lorenzo Ely. Brenda's efforts were supplemented by the findings of the Department of Agriculture's Philrice and National Irrigation Authority resulting in a joint recommendation for SRI. At this meeting, Brenda demonstrated how information technology (IT) can lead to a revolution in agriculture development.

When I wrote about SRI as a miracle rice technology, which was prior on April 16, I gave one more call phone number for interested parties seeking more information.

Promoting SRI

Within three days, people from every region of the country had called him. These calls were quickly motivated by the reported P78,000 to an income per hectare from each of three rice varieties, one of which was the hybrid bred. In the Philippines, the average yield of 3 metric tons/hectare increased to 6 tons with SRI use.

Testing through cell phone, is the first simple tool to IT to promote SRI. Brenda then used a very authentic, literal IT tool in agriculture development: the video compact disc or VCD. Instead of the expensive presentation of people coming to Manila for training, Brenda offered a P400 package to transfer SRI technology. He gave each participant a compact disc that contains two copies of a VCD at P50 each. A third copy (colored red) another P50, with the remaining P40 used for packaging and mailing. Needless to say, the savings derived from the use of IT are enormous.

For those interested, Brenda can be reached at 0919-668-7073.

Breakthroughs

Similar technology breakthroughs have occurred in the last 20 years. In the early '80s, when I was managing director of the then Technology Resource Center (now Technology and Livelihood Resource Center, or TLRC), we gave technology assistance on agriculture and small business. Some of the amateur participants are now among the top engineers of the country. They successfully displayed the results of the technology transfer in international exhibits and fairs, generating millions of dollars and thousand of jobs in the process.

Three seminars were then developed and successfully broadcast over Channel 7 for wider coverage. The shows became so popular that they were repackaged into VHS tapes for sale to the public. Their usefulness earned the support of Senator Sergio Osmeña III, who gave a P50-million budget for their limited distribution throughout the country.

Today, TLRC sells these VHS tapes at P725 each, much more than the P26 for the MOTOR. TLRC must recover their development costs, which is why they are high-priced. Unfortunately, there is the problem of the tapes' limited distribution. We are hoping to meet TLRC officials soon to explore ways of addressing this problem.

Being a VCD player can be bought for as P1,300, while the 17,000 download-capable cellphone units around with a VCD player and low cost VCDs, we could see how IT might start an agriculture revolution.

In agribusiness, low-cost but little known technologies are likewise available. Personal computers (PC) are now available for as low as P13,000 each. However, the accompanying basic operating systems and application packages offered by leading suppliers add this amount to an additional P30,000.

Available today are free operating systems and application packages such as the ones offered by LINUX/GNU. For small agribusiness, this free software can allow many data simplifications. For more information on this, you may call or text Amado Dimayuga at 0917-814-6802, or e-mail Dr. Leon at pinoy@yahoogroups.com.

Paradigm shift

Over the years, IT has become more effective and efficient. Its costs are also decreasing dramatically by the day. It is often thought that agriculture and IT are an opposite ends of a spectrum. It is now time we make a paradigm shift and realize the absolute necessity of IT for the revolution that we need in agriculture development. Starting with simple cell phone texting, VCD use and free software application, IT can dramatically improve our agriculture growth.

Perhaps a DA-led governmental-private sector task force should be created to address in a holistic and systemic manner the optimal utilization of IT in agriculture development.

(The author is chair of agrilawnet, a private sector initiative, former undersecretary of agriculture and trade and industry, and former chair and Cabinet secretary for Presidential Flagship Programs. For feedback, inquiries or suggestions, e-mail agrimedphil@yahoo.com or cellular 0920 905 0.)

COMMENTARY

Government expected to borrow more from local sources

By Michelle V. Remo

THE GOVERNMENT may no longer tap foreign sources to meet its remaining external borrowing requirement of about $50 million.

The government may instead turn to local sources to raise the funds needed to help plug the budget deficit.

According to National Treasurer Rizalina Figueroa, the government has raised almost all of the funds required from the foreign market this year.

She said the government needed a little less than $50 million more to supplement the $1.8 billion borrowing for the year.

Negligible

Figueroa said the government may no longer source the remaining $50 million from foreign sources as it would generate the amount domestically.

"We have already raised almost all of the scheduled foreign borrowings. The remaining amount is negligible, so we may not do that anymore [raise the amount from foreign sources]," Figueroa told reporters yesterday.

Global bonds

The government raised its foreign borrowing needs this year through the issuance of Philippine global bonds.

Figueroa said the government was not considering issuing more global bonds despite the successful sale of $400 million worth of bonds on behalf of the state-run National Power Corp. last Tuesday.

"We won't do it [tap the foreign bond market] just to raise [the remaining amount," said Figueroa.

Opportunity

She said the government would only consider issuing global bonds if it would find an opportunity to do so at reasonable rates.

An option is to raise the funds locally through the auction of treasury bills and bonds.

The Bureau of Treasury earlier announced that it was scheduled to borrow P30 billion in May through the bimonthly auction of short-term T-bills.

Bigger amounts

The scheduled borrowing for the month through long-term bonds, meanwhile, was set at P9 billion.

The amounts were higher than the P9 billion and the P6.5 billion scheduled to be generated from the auction of T-bills and T-bonds, respectively, in April.

Proceeds from the sale would be used to plug the budget deficit.

The government's deficit was expected to be reduced to 197.8 billion this year from last year's P199.6 billion.

A TURNAROUND FOR VICTORIAS MILLING

Sugar firm seeks stocks trade after 7-year hiatus

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

SUGAR miller Victorias Milling Corp. is hoping to be traded again in the stock market after seven years when it was allowed to swap debt payment and suspended from trading.

Sources told the Inquirer that should the company secure the approval to be delisted from the stock exchange in financial trouble, Victorias would apply to resume trading of its shares in the stock market.

Sources also said that there is a possibility of a proxy fight as the Gotianun group is expected to increase its shares to keep a board seat in the company. Andrew Gotianun Sr. holds 3.7 per cent in the company and sits as a director of the sugar firm's 11-man board, representing the company's controlling shareholder, Banco De Oro Universal Bank.

Sources said that in order to secure one board seat, one needs eight to ten percent of the company's outstanding shares.

VMC's unsecured lenders earlier agreed that six of the company's largest unsecured lenders, regardless of their holdings in the bank, would acquire its seat in the board.

Philippine National Bank and other syndicate banks and Trust, as the two biggest shareholders, each hold 10 percent.

One board seat is reserved for VMC's secured creditor Equitable PCI Bank, and another is for the company's strategic investor Danding Holdings Inc.

The balance of three seats are occupied by those who own shares before banks converted their loans into equity.

These three directors are VMC president Arthur Aquilo, senior vice president Abelardo Bagay and retired VMC executive Isidoro C. Cayco.

Last September, P2.4 billion of the company's outstanding loan obligations were turned into common shares. The conversion will be followed in the financial statements for the year ending Aug. 31.

One of the debt reduction measures under VMC's alternative rehabilitation plan is for creditor banks to convert into equity P1.1 billion of the outstanding loan obligations of VMC. The said conversion resulted in a change of control in the company effective last October 2002. Now creditor banks control 63 percent of VMC.

Gotianun earlier teamed up with the Lobregat group and offered a P900-million loan to VMC to help the latter comply with a rehabilitation plan. But Teodoro Holdings Inc. under Lucio Tan managed to win over the two when it offered a much lower interest rate and a longer repayment term.

VMC was last traded in October 1997 and closed at 87 centavos apiece.

VMC recently reported its gross earned income for the first time in seven years at P51.3 million for the nine-year ending Aug. 31, 2003. In 1997, VMC was allowed to suspend debt payments and undergo rehabilitation. VMC reportedly told the Securities and Exchange Commission it would expand its production capacity this year to chalk additional income that would be used to service its debts.

VMC said it would embark on a raw house expansion project that would increase its capacity to 35,000 tons of sugarcane per day (TCD) from 13,000 TCD.

The proposed expansion would generate additional income for the company to pay for its debt consolidation.

VMC said crushing for the sugarcane would be resumed from a P600-million rehabilitation from Tuesday.

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Neda urges wider coverage of auto export incentives

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE NATIONAL Economic and Development Authority board has endorsed to Malacañang amendments in Executive Order No. 344 that expands the coverage of incentives on completely built up (CBU) vehicle exports, according to Trade Secretary Cesar V. Purisima.

EO 344 allows for the direct export of completely built up units at a minimum volume of 10,000 units a year, each of which should be worth at least $5,000 freight on board (FOB), or the cost of the car produced excluding freight cost.

In a statement, Purisima said the proposed amendments would restructure provisions for regular CBU exports.

However, allowance for additional three categories of exports were proposed:

- Direct CBU exports of distinguished vehicles... currently new basic models designed to be produced in the country primarily for exclusive export at least in Southeast Asian countries. Exports should be at least 5,000 units a year at a minimum FOB cost of $5,000/unit.
- Direct CBU export of low volume niche vehicles, which are existing basic cars or variant models currently not assembled in the country and the facilities for which should be released for exclusive operation here. Exports should be at least 2,500 units a year or a minimum FOB cost of $15,000 each.

Purisima said incentives for niche CBU exports would be granted from the time the models of a variant becomes exclusively assembled in the country.

- Direct export of high-value but low-volume CBUs. Volumes should be at least 2,500 units a year at a minimum FOB cost of $30,000/unit.

Further, Purisima said the proposed expanded incentives would boost the government's initiative in promoting the Philippines as an auto manufacturing hub in Asia.

"If approved, the move would increase job opportunities in the automotive sector and increase auto manufacturing in the country," he said.

The official said that based on a preliminary study of the trade department, expanding the coverage of CBU export incentives would draw an increase in the production and sale of CBUs in a range of 200,000 units to 250,000 units within the next five years.

Metrobank sees net profit growing to ₱3.5B this year

By Doris C. Dumlao

METROPOLITAN Bank and Trust Co., the country's biggest bank, aims to chalk up P3.5 to P4 billion in net profits this year—better than the P3.02 billion posted last year—on the back of stable loan growth.

At the sidelines of the bank's stockholders' meeting on Wednesday, Metrobank executive vice president and treasurer Alfredo Jose-lana II said the profit target for this year would be backed by an expected 5 to 10 percent expansion in loan portfolio.

"We're looking at a better economy this year so loan growth is expected especially in the middle market as," Joselana said. "We anticipate consumer loans to also improve and ... large corporations to continue to borrow."

Last year, the bank's loan portfolio rose by 6 percent. The remaining P3.02 billion in net profits, on the other hand, was about 20 percent better than the P2.52 billion reaped in 2003 net of provisions for probable losses amounting to P3.53 billion.

Joselana said the bank likewise planned to set aside at least P3.5 billion in loan loss provisions for this year.

"That's the low end of it (bank's budget) but hopefully it could be more," he said.

Joselana estimated that, in the first quarter of the year alone, the bank's net earnings had increased by about 30 percent from the same periods last year.

"It's more of combination of net interest income and fees," Joselana said. "Of course trading gains went down a little bit, but we had better results in other areas."

Metrobank's executive vice president core noperforming loans (NPLs) were prior to the passage of the Special Purpose Vehicles law, is also trying to dispose more of those idle assets.

"But at this stage, nobody's interested," Joselana said. "Prices are way below what we expected. If you notice, the institutions that were interested in NPLs have tried to buy from local banks. But there appears to be some problem in pricing, and the SPV law has not addressed that problem."

Peso slides back . . .

From page B1

The local currency opened at 55.60 and reached an intra-day high of 55.76 before closing at zero day low of 56 on the dollar bid. Total volume turnover stood at $134.3 million.

A local dealer said the peso's depreciation yesterday was but a normal correction after the country's gains last week. However, the trader said the closing at its zero-day low had a "technical" significance.

"If it again closes above 1561, the correctionary be prolonged," the trader said.

"I think people are staying on the sidelines as we approach the elections. So I think the peso will now trade at a tight range of 55.60-56.25 until the elections are over," the trader added.

On Tuesday the peso reached a three-month high as investors feared the latest surveys that showed incumbent President Macapagal-Arroyo gaining lead over her rivals.

The trader said the peso had long been delinked from the baht and that heavy corporate dollar requirement was the bigger factor behind yesterday's depreciation.

The US dollar had been under pressure overnight, weighing down on Asian and European currencies yesterday. The dollar benefited from the surprise jump in US consumer confidence in April as well as record home sales.

In the meantime, the BSP yesterday said that net international reserves (NIR) of the country's foreign currency deposit units amounted to $4.88 billion as of end-2003, 0.9 percent higher than the end-September level.

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Mindanao trade up 4.49% to $539M in 2003

DAVAO CITY — Trade in Mindanao was up a modest 4.49 percent in the third quarter of 2003, according to the Mindanao Economic Development Council.

Medco data showed that Mindanao's total trade for the period rose to $539 million in 2003 from $515.8 million in the same period the previous year.

Medco, an attached agency of the Office of the President, said Mindanao's exports also grew by 6.82 percent in the third quarter last year.

The value of products shipped out during the period increased from $329 million in 2002 to $352 million last year.

Medco said bananas, pineapple, coconut oil, tuna and fish are agglomerates contributed to by Mindanao's prime exports commodities.

The agency noted that Mindanao exports contributed to the bulk of Mindanao's export earnings in the third quarter of 2003, valued at $466.75 million, up 22 percent from $371.37 million the previous year.

Pineapple exports, on the other hand, increased by 11 percent from $249.85 million to $265.64 million.

Presidential Assistant for Mindanao and Media chair Jesus Dureza said the island enjoys positive performance showed "the resilience of the local economies and their ability to respond to continuing global demand for Mindanao products."

Region 11 or the Garaga Region posted the highest export growth rate at 109.35 percent due to significant increase in initial oil exports.

Dureza called for the continued improvement of products and production processes, along with developing additional markets for Mindanao's products to sustain Mindanao's positive economic performance. *PIA Mindanao Bureau*

What should investors do now?

MR. BEARBULL

Rose Vashart

I WAS NOT CHRISTENED Isaias Cayang born and girls singing and being enslaved by three judges. It was called American Idol. I watched Christian SIRENIDAD addressing Congress. He told them that 2.4 million Americans had lost manufacturing jobs and would not get them back. This should have been called American Idle.

My grandfather lived to 98 and my father asked him the secret of his longevity. He replied that each morning, he put a spoonful of gunpowder on his cornflakes. By the day Father did the same and lived to 100. He left behind seven children, 28 grandchildren, and 35 great grandchildren; also, an 18-foot hole in the back wall of the crematorium.

CAPPUCCI advisers, PHLBEBUL, suddenly changed the grade of the Philippines from 1.92 to 2.28. I hope they are not involved in the vote counting. The five candidates will all win, and poll 750 percent of the votes. I am not including the other fellow as he is over the hill.

Simba, the Lion King, died of a heart attack. He forgot to take his multivitamin (this is my 6-year-old daughter's joke. She loves playing with words and does so in English and Tagalog).

The Chinese beat themselves with chopsticks but how do they feed their 2-year-olds? Pitch-forked-ie?

I went to a high-class party. The hostess wore a fabulously expensive gown, fully encrusted and upon her chocolate all over it. She was lovely and refined. "Never eat before my Dior again." Fortunately, she could get the stains out and had a party of her own where she displayed her worn-again Christian.

According to my cousin and aunt, Imam saved their lives. When the town Thomas Saint 21 battles, the locusts were watched away. My aunt floated on safety on the dining room table and he accompanied her on the piano.

FPJ is starring in a Filipino version of *The Invisible Man*. So it is a non-speaking part, he will not be seen or heard.

* * *

The Inquirer covered the market in such detail last week that there is nothing much to add. Last week was the best the stock market has had for a very long time and it ended at a three-year high. My degree of risk indicator for MDS was 1 (anywhere 0 and 1 is given a BELL signal). I mentioned AEF at P2.80, so to risk factor was zero, and a few days later it was P3.10. I also drew attention to PCOR at P2.40, so there should be a dividend announcement early in May and it promptly jumped to P3.35.

On Monday, CAPPUBI agreed to keep its Philippine investments which only account for 4 cents on every $100 invested. See exactly over-weight.

There, on Tuesday, imports rose 7.5 percent, which is good, because last month was down. Investor fled are astonished and expected often six months.

So in six months' time, our experts should be higher. Meanwhile our main deficit in January turned into a small surplus in February.

On Wednesday, PBEB (Brent) produced excellent results with Intel's profit up 40 percent, and a 2-for-1 stock split from Nokia.

Chairman GREENSPIRIT gave a bullish speech to Congress and announced that deflation was dead, and inflation not a problem because the increase in productivity was awesome.

He expected further job creation and was generally happy with the economy. This was followed by a big jump on Wall Street which pushed markets higher worldwide and caused the dollar to strengthen.

On Thursday, IMPU affirmed that profits this year would rise 30 percent and dividend by 20 percent. Intel announced a 2-for-1 stock split and a 10 percent increase in dividends, totaling 13 centavos. IPI announced a 20 percent stock dividend.

But the big event was Friday morning when the latest survey from the Pendex Bureau told you weather. Ghib would win in one. She increased her lead to 4.5 percent, PEMI and EMIRE remained unchanged, and BOSS fell from 35 percent to 8 percent.

Although encouraging, it is not yet a foregone conclusion as there is a 5 percent margin of error. 11 percent are undecided, and a number of people have indicated that they might change their vote at the last minute. Even so, the 4.5 point gain has to help indicators, and whoever chair President Macapagal will be returned.

What should investors do now? First, never trade against the trend (1st Commandment). So, while the index is rising, stay with it, but once it starts to retreat, I am advising my clients to play safe and take profits. I will be the possible scenarios and the probable response of the market to each.

1) Ghib wins easily by 5 percent to 10 percent. The opposition will have to concede peacefully, and the market will go higher. However, if it climbs up hundreds of points, SELL, because we will have a P4 billion hole, 40 percent of the population living below the poverty level and the highest unemployment in the Asia-Pacific region.

These problems will not simply go away but will require years of concerted effort by the government and the legislature.

When Ghib was inaugurated, the index opened 3500 points higher at 1,953 and MBEB was 986. I went out a BELL ALERT Five things to worry there, and by the day's close, the gain had been halved. In the year that followed, the index crashed, losing a loss of 986.

Only in recent months has the market recovered, and it is still 1,900 points lower than it was in Jan. 9, 1997. So we remain the biggest of fans, an opinion reinforced by the IMF last Friday.

2) Ghib wins by a small margin as happened in the last 53 elections. The opposition will accuse the administration of massive fraud and there will be numerous demonstrations and probably violence, even bombings. Under these circumstances, the market may cut-tail.

3) FPJ wins by a small margin. Then the administration will go on the battlings and the military might get involved. The market will fall.

4) PEI wins convincingly. The market will crash, as foreigners and local investors try to get out. The peso will rise to 57 at least. Inevitably the market WILL find a bottom but it will be a severe smacking period.

Regardless of who wins, the trade unions are not going to get an increase of P65 to P120 a day. They will be allowed about P60, possibly P25, in line with the past two year's inflation. Then the strikes will begin and the market will react. However, because unemployment is so high, workers will be afraid of losing their jobs and will settle, but not easily, not a fight.

In 2022, on a big rise or if the polls indicate a reversal of trend, SELL if the market collapses and everything is bleak. Investors fear tonight are their things are never as good or as bad as they appear to be. mrbear@philstar.com

Hog raisers buck carabeef imports

THE NATIONAL Federation of Hog Farmers Inc. has appealed to President Macapagal-Arroyo and Agriculture Secretary Luis Lorenzo to act against the excessive importation of carabeef.

NFHFI chair Romano Ee said the principal source of carabeef used in PMEI-infected India. He explained that PMEI is highly contagious and can spread like wildfire, even to USE-certified, PMEI-free Visayas and Mindanao.

Nick Briones, NFHFI official and president of Limcoma, a Batangas hog farmers' cooperative, said Indian carabeef must be legally imported at the rate of 5 million kilos a month.

But legal importation, he explained, was not risk-free.

He said that the US, Australia, New Zealand and other developed countries banned importation from PMEI-infected countries and zones to protect their livestock industry.

The local hog farmers also fear the rapid, if not more pernicious, Bilateral-said.

Briones said the need to protect the country's food supply and security prompted the federation to lobby for the approval of Senate Bill No. 1864, a law that will allow meat importation only from PMEI-free countries and zones.

The House version of the bill, HB 707, was approved, but no Senate version was passed.

Ee said the federation and its supporters will work again for an anti-PMEI bill when the 13th Congress convenes.

FRIDAY, APRIL 30, 2004

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

LIFESTYLE

Chin Chin Bassi-Formoso

MONDAY ARTS • TUESDAY FITNESS • WEDNESDAY 2BU • THURSDAY FOOD • FRIDAY FASHION BEAUTY HOME • SUNDAY SURPRISES

Pinay now designs for Sarah Jessica Parker

THE FASHION buzz is true. A Filipina designer has finally broken into American couture, specifically into the Hollywood style circle. **Monique Lhuillier** is fast becoming a hot name among Hollywood stars. Last week in New York, stylesetter **Sarah Jessica Parker** snapped up seven ensembles of Monique. The designer herself attended to the star of "Sex and the City."

Last Monday over lunch at Waterfront Hotels and Casino in Cebu, **Amparito Lhuillier**, Monique's mom and one of Cebu's society icons, was waxing ecstatic over Monique's latest conquest. She said Monique was just unveiling up her participation in the US bridal collections when Parker went to her for clothes.

LIFE-STYLED

Thelma Yason Sayo-Juan

Ultra-elegant

The 35-year-old Monique started out as a bridal gown designer and has now expanded to ultra-elegant women's fashion, particularly evening wear in very feminine lines, silk and soft fabrics (particularly lace) and intricate yet hip detailing (frayed edges, for instance).

Last year her name started cropping up in 'W Vogue and other fashion glossies when stars started wearing her clothes, especially at high-wattage events such as the Golden Globe Awards. "The Sopranos" star **Annie DiNicola** just wore a Monique Lhuillier black lacy number on the TV series' premiere. In its recent issue, Vogue has been singling her out as one of today's "it" designers. Her latest celeb bride was **Lea Salonga**.

Now, even with such career trajectory, **Sarah Jessica Parker** is still quite a catch for Monique.

What surprised us was Amparito's revelation that Monique has been on her own all this time. She thought her success was being fueled extensively by the Lhuillier heritage. Turned out, this was only at the start.

"This June marks the eighth year since we gave her a $10,000 start-up money. This was on May 8, 1997," said Amparito, who seems not only like a proud mother but also a diligent chronicler of her daughter's success.

"And she hasn't asked us for help since," she said.

Monique and her husband **Tom Hughes**, a Californian she met as a student in Los Angeles, parlayed that initial sum into a successful career, and now business, to the tune of $10,000, she made five bridal gowns which she sold, and before long, her reputation grew and she began joining fashion shows. Her career began in LA.

She started out by diligently peddling her well-designed wedding gowns, some-times from out of her car, then she opened a store in Beverly Hills. Now she has an office shop in a cozy section in Mississippi. And more significantly, she's been joining the New York haute couture collections at Bryant Park for three years now.

She must have arrived to join the league limited only to the Council of Fashion Designers of America. And Monique has been accepted into the Council. She'd have her show after that of **Carolina Herrera**. Not a bad schedule at all.

Working as the home

To hear Amparito say it, Monique and Tom have been working in the home. Tom is an MBA degree holder whose forte is in finance and entrepreneurship. He handles the business while Monique concentrates on design. Indeed no better partnership could there be. They have been married for nine years now.

Monique is the youngest of four children, who, Amparito recalls, has been so focused on dressing up as early as 3 years old. "She'd change clothes four times a day, and by 18, she knew fabrics and textures," said the mother who's ultra-stylish herself.

Apparently, from childhood onward, Monique had had her mind set on a fashion career. After high school, instead of going into a business course as her folks preferred, she was dead set on enrolling in a fashion design school.

At 18, without any backer, she asked her brother Michael to bring her to an interview at the Fashion Institute of Design in Los Angeles. The required age for admission for college was 18, but Monique was able to wrangle an interview somehow.

After that interview, she related, must have been so impressed with her zeal and potential that it made an exception in her case. She was the youngest student at FID but also one of the top.

Now a Monique Lhuillier store is open seven days a week, with almost 50 employees working in shop.

There are moves to present Monique Lhuillier's collection late this year for the benefit of ABS-CBN Bantay Bata Foundation.

Waterfront bridal fair

We were in Cebu Waterfront preparing for one of the biggest social events this year—"Weddings at the Waterfront 2004," the brainchild of general manager **Marco Pessarin** and a collaboration between the hotel and Bride Magazine.

The style setter of 'Sex and The City' is Monique Lhuillier's latest conquest

Among the events from July 2-4 in the Metro Pear, Cebu edition, which will feature the 2005 collections of foremost Cebu designers **Gil Hofer, Arcy Laquiña, Philip Rodrigues, Edsa Llanos, Jun Escaños** and **Protacio Empuerto**.

E-mail the author at sayo-juan@skyinet.net

MONIQUE Lhuillier

BEAUTYRICE Balcony Bra in black

Get a shape

AVON Fashionus makes it easy for women to become sexy with the new Beauvice Balcony Brassiere.

The brassiere has a plunge enhancing balcony frame that pushes breasts upward, delicate floral lace on the cups and slim, double straps.

It is available from Avon Ladies in Ayala Center and Avon Boutiques in Glorietta, SM Megamall, SM Southmall and SM Mall.

Beauvice Balcony Bra is available in skin tone and black in sizes 32AB, 34AB and 36AB.

BEAUTYRICE Balcony Bra in skin tone

Waxing poetic

MAKEOVER 911

Kimmy Salon

ORIGINS' Incredible Spreadable Scrub

Before you wear that itsie-bitsie teenie weenie bikini, get a wax job

WOMEN SECRET lingerie

REJOICE. I went to Stephanie Salon at Rockwell because all my friends were telling me to try the bikini wax there, the best of which was done by a woman named Sonia.

When I met her, the very sweet and entertaining Sonia patiently explained the different types of bikini wax available.

The Hawaii type, for instance, denies the sides and a little of the top, leaving behind a triangle. This happens to be the most requested style from her clients.

The Sonia Brazilian variant takes out considerably more than the Hawaii style and leaves only a strip of line behind. It's called the Charlie Chaplin (don't ask me why) and is a favorite among women who travel to resorts, abroad.

The Brazilian type means a total wipeout... anyone who watches "Sex and the City" knows this. Being quite extreme, Sonia only has seven items in the list for this procedure, and none of them are foreigners.

But, yes, it's the style I chose for myself. The experience was so relaxing and painless because Sonia used ice to numb the pain. She is very thorough in diligently plucking leftovers, which can take longer. But then, you end up with great results. I was still waiting for the pain when I heard her say, "See you in four weeks!"

Whichever style you choose, Sonia will charge you the same amount. It is $1,500!

There are other good bikini waxers, such as Arlene of Salon Ortiz, who effectively distracts you from the pain as you hardly feel it at all.

We pre-trained French-style bikini hair removal, Strix Medical Clinic has extensive experience in this. But, please, make sure you go to them early as the expired unsightly will sink in before the procedure.

Cosmetic surgeon Anna Chaser sent Jayne gone for the Brazilian type, but their tolerance for pain was astonishing else, so I don't advise it.

Home body scrub

Origins' Incredible Spreadable Scrub, exclusively available at Rustan's, gives you a chance of sea salts with a peppermint scent or ESS in ginger. Yummy for, gracious both, and scrubbing for summer.

Apply to dry skin from the neck down, concentrating on rough or congested spots such as the shoulders, chest, back, elbows and knees, then rinse off.

Apply body cream such as Origins Drink or ginger body souffle. For those who want a light, marine scent or an unscented clean smell, try Physician's body cream or lotion.

For skin whitening, try Godiva's favorite skin lotion, which does not feel greasy, is reasonably priced and smells like a bouquet of fresh flowers.

To get baby-soft feet, Crabtree and Evelyn's La Source foot smoother and foot and leg therapy is the answer.

La Source has a good, clean, unisex marine scent. The foot smoother feels like very fine sweet sand with moist grit, which sloughs off rough spots and leaves the water content on feet.

The foot and leg therapy soak is the effects of the foot smoother and makes your feet supple.

I used the foot smoother for my dark, rough knees and elbows and it worked great.

Also try: Pumice and paper crème for hands, feet, elbows and knees.

After all the waxing and scrubbing, you can unleash your quirky side covertly by expressing yourself through underwear. Not all of us have the kind of job that lets us express our inner child, but we all need an outlet.

When I go underwear shopping, I end up with either plain Jane functional pieces or those with lacy-racy styles. There's your classic dichotomy there, but we women are more complex than that, right?

There's a new lingerie line that I imagine will express our inner Meg Ryan or Jennifer Love Hewitt, the icons of sexy girls next door. **Women's secret is a Spanish lingerie and sleepwear brand that mixed our for the because of its adorable prints and the fact that it accommodates hard to find bra sizes such as 30A or from DC cups up to 40C.**

The sizes are by no means for the Anne Geddes, but more for the fuller European and even American women. The catch? The great quality and cute prints come with a price that's totally affordable: less than P1,000.

I especially liked the floppy-eared bunny print and the red pinstripes. I know it's great to have matching panties but for one with a budget, you have to choose carefully and just buy solid-colored ones elsewhere. Tougher than it sounds, believe me.

Stephanie Salon may be reached at 8580303. Salon Ortiz, 8151837, Bio Med 8177178. Physician and Origins are exclusively available at Rustan's, Godiva and Jeanne at any PCE and Watsons.

Women's Secret lingerie is shown at Rockwell and Robinsons Galleria.

THE JUDGES: iron model actor Reggie Curley; socialites and philanthropists Elena Romualdez, native jewelers T. Oberio; Capt. Roberto Ortosa; socialite Herbie Sarmiento; Pacap Moro Style and Society editor and marketing director John Castigador; Agrarian Reform Undersecretary Ricardo Arriesa; businessman Jun Dumlao; Iloilo's fashion prince Eric de los Santos and model/hair and beauty director Engel Loring

Opulent past inspires Iloilo beauty pageant

THE ILOILO Queen 2004 and Hiyas winners were crowned in two one-hours style—with pomp and circumstance, pathogens, in a first-paced pageant at the posh Sarao Terrace of the elegant Hotel del Rio.

This year's pageant theme revolved around the fabulous mansions, the Iloilo elite call "Bonita." The mansions, with unique and stunning architectures, are testaments to an opulent era and members of the Hongqui families elegance.

Owned by the de Rosas families, the mansions have everyone in awe as they imagine the lavish lifestyles of the occupants.

Sweet 16 Indian Antoinette Cabrera of the West Visayas State University High School, and Marie Carla Blanco of the Visayas State University College of Mass Communication, candidate 10 other candidates. They were named Iloilo Queen 2004 and Hiyas Sang Iloilo 2004, respectively.

Without batting an eyelash, pathogen, the board of judges headed southern hostess like socialite philanthropist Elena Romualdez, model/actor Reggie Curley, Capt. Jun Dumlao, native Jeanette T. Oberio, Jesamaria Agrisan of Green Magazine, Iloilo's fashion prince Eric de los Santos, 3M City Iloilo marketing manager and "Woman of Style 2003," Antonia Gonzalez, hotelier and hotel-owned Engel Loring; hairstyle princess Amy Aguillon and Felipe Lim; dashing Makati tycoon/ president, Jed Mabilog; Agrarian Reform Undersecretary Ricardo Arriesa; Getty-Images of Nabitasan, Plaridel, Capt. Rolando Ortosa; socialite Herbie Sarmiento; and Pacap Moro Style and Society editor and marketing director, the one-of-a-kind, popular John B. Castigador.

Queen-fashion hogged tons of publicity, media rush to a trip to Hong Kong. She also received the Miss Goodlife and Miss Epidemik corporate awards. Maria Carla Monica Reviera took the feeling of the Prize, Miss Photogenic and Miss Bamboo prizes.

The opening number was truly Hongqui-ful. It was inspired by "Fiorella Cruz," a romantic by Hongqui literary genius Magdalena Jalandoni. The candidates wore northern-to-there's capes by Iloilo's grand dame of fashion, Senen Ong. Titivated Ms-Nic Manalastas did the elegant poses worn by the candidates in the long gown competition.

One of the judges whispered to me, "If those beauties really were to stand out, they should mingle with ugly people." Ouch!

The pageant, the brainchild of Iloilo premier showman Eddie Ariston, fashion designer Frederick Jenseno and Richard Cabrera, was under the auspices of the Señor Santo Niño Festival Queens of Iloilo, Inc. and incorporators.

Proceeds went to the Cofradia de Sr. Sto Niño of the Iloilo Jose Obrero of Iloilo City and the St. Pius X Seminary of Roxas City, pathogens.

Slinky shoe line

Internationally renowned Fila gave us a fab glimpse of their 2004 slinky shoe line, Fila Diesel. Fila lined up to its regulations as a casual corner to prod. ect launches, inviting some 200 Diesel hikers in the Philippines, who brought their bikes. Eye-catching sexy Fila Diesel babes, dressed in the latest Fila attire, mingled with the invitees and partied the night away.

But those not in the know, dabbings, Diesel is an internationally known brand, the Pesi cast of motorbikes; it bike is priced at a unit P1.2million each.

Showcased in the party was the one and only piece available in the Philippines of a limited edition Fila Diesel motorbike: only 200 worldwide. It is

covered by Ha Jalbuena, a ex pop. star sportsman.

Jedeline Rosales is the main Fila endorser.

Fila bags, socks, slippers and sandals are all available in Fila stores. Check them out.

Defense against aging

They say your skin and eyes are the mirrors of your soul. And when the eyes stare flawless, smooth skin, pathogens? So now here's the good news, darlings.

One of the world's most advance systemic skincare products (i.e. skincare from within) has landed on our shores, and

ILOILO Queen 2004 Celina Antoinette Cabrera (center) court of honorees—first runner-up Christje Carmelup (Hiyas Sang Iloilo Maria Clara Monica Reviera and second runner-up Jezzel Palermo

STUNNER Susanne Iloilo's and my super hostess, society lady Marlene Sarmiento; Jed Mabilog and Eddie Jumao

HEADSTAR Philippines country manager Myles Salat with Pepsi's Gaila Favis and Dr. Lars Lindstark, vice president for scientific affairs of Perrocan A/S

COSMOPOLITAN Magazine's fashionable Myrtle Elan is an Iloilonon follower.

has his Manville's cosmopolitan manners and suave like a heart-seam. The fab Insidieve Time Perfection, the dual-action skincare formula, was launched in a fitting power lunch attended by avid users of Insidieve and the press, natch.

Taking off from Insidieve Classic, with its skin-revitalizing benefits and which not have been using for eons, Insidieve Time Perfection not only helps strengthens the inner layer of the skin, but also defends it from aging. Now that's great news, pathogens.

Presiding at the yummy lunch at the popular Pepsen's was brilliant lady in the house, Peruvian Philippines country manager, Kowlson-educated Myles Salat and TV's ultra glam girl, journalist Cox Dribon who beautifully hosted the interesting event.

Highlight of the day pathogens, was the presentation by tall, impressive, hotshot Dr. Lars Lindstark, vice president for scientific affairs of Perrocan A/S, who jetted in from Europe to speak on the secret behind Insidieve Time Perfection.

According to Dr. Lindstark, Insidieve Time Perfection was launched in response to changing skincare needs. The breakthrough product contains the skin-rejuvenating properties of Biomarine Complex and a skin defense system, UpoPhenox 50. Translation, many appreciate the idea of skin care going deep into the skin's inner layer, where the

POPULAR sportscaster Anthony Suntay with a Fila Ducati girl

process of aging begins.

Dr. Lindstark cited clinical studies conducted by US researcher Stephens and associates showing how continued use of Insidieve Time Perfection will enhance your looks as lines and wrinkles disappear and the youthful glow is restored.

Those attending Insidieve Time Perfection's launch were Insidieve users Cynthia Sanchez, Elsa Rosales, Jeannie de Jesus, Cristy Panes and not, of course, Dots, Paint and everywhere user Precious Phillippines' gang of three—national sales manager, size: Mimi Gandionco; finance manager Pat Parmales and marketing services specialist, Ningin Pilladio.

HANDSOME Troy Montero serenading Ute de Bel-Ieuzelon

MOVERS and shakers: Peruvian Philippines executives with top TV broadcast journalist Cox Dribon (in pink), who hosted the event

A TRUE Fila babe: Desiree Rose

FILA'S mother and daughter: Wanda Lucenallon and Cris Albert with socialite Marbelton Bautista

THE FILA Ducati motorcycle

MODEL Bianca Aranaza with Winston and Olga Dichupa's son, Michelle and Harvey Tan King

HOTSHOTS of the affair: Shirts Depot's Winston Dichupa, with Fila's Cris Albert; Shirts Depot's Olga Dichupa; Flam's Chris Chungcom; Dragon Tiger's Oscar Co; Euro Asia Apparel's Wendy Jing; Ground's William Cuanco; Fila's Butch Albert and Tokyo Pacific's Addison Uy

THE BLUE bedroom mirrors the color of the sea and roars away from the house's earthy color scheme.

WALL mirrors are reminiscent of roseaux and faux pieces, while furniture pieces are made mostly of wrought iron and abaca by Cebu designers.

THE CIRCULAR bed is one of the master bedroom's focal points.

Modern living amid Moorish splendor

ACCENT windows with classical details

Text by Alex T. Vergara
Photos by Jim Dalan Pamadan

Oh, well probably two out of adjectives to describe Casey Cordoba's latest playroom-upon-a-dome-shaped-work-of-art home, which he shares with wife Tammy and their daughter Mimay, at Punta Fuego in Nasugbu, Batangas.

Whether viewed from the sea or from the clubhouse, it's impossible to miss the huge three-story term which comes with a grand octagonal statue of St. Michael perched on top of its concrete green roof.

By this, stalwart interiors tell a more interesting story, as Cordoba drew inspirations from Turkish and Moroccan aesthetics and perhaps even pilfering set bedrooms.

After nearly five years of interspersed construction, the Cordobas will formally welcome guests tomorrow to their home, which the owner of house has aptly christened La Mezquita de Cordoba or the mosque of Cordoba.

Cordoba has good friend Ignacio Gandiaga, general manager of Club Punta Fuego, to thank for coming up with such a name.

Gandiaga was regaling him and Tammy with stories over dinner about a medieval Catholic church in Cordoba, a southern city in his native Spain. Because of a profusion of Moorish and Arabic influences, said Gandiaga, there's no hiding the fact that the church was once upon a time a mezquita de Cordoba.

No practical designer

Having done a fair share of minimalist projects in his nearly three decades career as an interior and production designer, Cordoba is still the first to admit that he's no "practical" designer. Or "less urban" as

Unlike his wife, he's one of his strongest critics. On the contrary, he likes to describe himself as a "theoretical" designer who never think twice about sacrificing function over form.

"Even during the height of minimalism," he says, "I never it was a trend that would die a natural death. Minimalism was simply an excuse for the region's economic woes."

Something minimalist was, in fact, Cordoba's initial plan for the house, until Punta Fuego's developers "pushed" him to come up with the "ultimate" in Mediterranean architecture. With the help of several contractors, he also doubled as La Mezquita's architect.

"It's actually quite up," he says, with an obvious modern design with straight lines that incorporated curved-looking corners.

But what's a Cordoba structure without the dome? The folks at Punta Fuego probably found the design's focal point, a pyramid-with a glass top that glows in the daytime once the house is lit from inside, too far off by their standards.

In his frustration and anger at being "scuttled, Cordoba did a 360-degree turn by coming up with a Mediterranean-inspired design that incorporated Iberi and fantasy history and future, classic and popular influences.

There was no way the board could disapprove his design, he says, as it didn't specifically violate anything in the contract. He wasn't surprised, however, when the board later had to revise and create some points in its future contracts that were written in fine print.

"They wanted something Mediterranean," he says with naughty grin. "Now I gave them my idea of Mediterranean."

Despite his grand aspirations, Cordoba also proved to be a versatile and practical designer. Instead of buying expensive foreign brands, for instance, he tapped the best furniture makers in Cebu to execute one-of-a-kind pieces made of woven leather, abaca and banana leaves.

Huge, undulating leather sofas, which can double as beds for unexpected guests, follow the circular contours of the oriental living room. Behind them are abaca woven magrets that divide the area from the dining room and study beside.

Owing to Punta Fuego's terrain, it's quite common for houses to climb around rocky cliffs bordering the South China Sea. Thus, if viewed from the ocean, cliff-side structures seek their way down instead of up.

Sweeping view

Despite its size, La Mezquita has only enough space for a master bedroom on the second floor and two small bedrooms in the basement. How come?

The entire second floor is devoted to the Cordoba couple's love nest, a circular space that leads to a spacious outdoor veranda that offers a sweeping view of the sea.

"Much as we love to be around with friends," says Cordoba, "we also value our privacy. Tammy and I felt there was no need to allot space for another bedroom."

Aside from the circular bed measured on a raise of leather-woven platform, one of the bedroom's focal points is its tiled ceiling that follows the dome's contours.

The contemporary blue bathroom, which is big enough to double as a small bedroom, opened from the entire house's earthy flavor and color scheme.

Cordoba's creativity extends to his ability to find other uses for certain objects.

During a vacation in Bali with Tammy a few years ago, he fell in love with the plant and now it is a rich source of furniture and accent

MOROCCAN and Turkish influences, and everything in between

THE ivory guestroom made of woven banana leaves may be fan and/or between, but they're huge.

BOHIO the antique-looking structures are niches featuring carved wooden images of the Iloncot body.

CORDOBA'S favorite area is the house's the veranda.

THE CORDOBAS: Casey, Tammy and Mimay

SWIMMING pool with Bulacan-ins

GIANT arms will be lit tomorrow as the Cordobas welcome guests.

MASSIVE statue of St. Michael perched on top of La Mesquita de Cordoba's roof

WHICH is faux and which is real? That you have to find out up close.

pieces—from wooden images such as the giant statue of St. Michael, to baked tiles that have found their way on headboards, arches and parts of the house's ceiling.

"I found myself going back to Bali a number of times on shopping trips," he says. "If you ask me now how much I've spent on this house, I can tell you with a straight face that I have no idea. I'm so poor at keeping track of my expenses."

The Balinese flavor extends to La Mesquita's swimming pool, which features, among others, a gazebo with a tiled roof.

Wooden accent pieces from Bali spill over to a huge 12-seat dining table, where several wooden candleholders vie for space with a carved fruit bowl now filled with shells and shiny balls. Woven chairs made of such materials as abaca and contrasting tones of leather strips add to the visual overload.

"I couldn't find a dining table big enough to suit my purpose," he says. "So I settled for a conference table. It's big yet unobtrusive, so as not to clash with the other elements found in this area."

Gold tiles

Again, Cordoba allowed his fear of empty spaces to get the better of him.

This time, he dressed up a wall in the dining area with gold-dipped tiles from Italy before accenting it with a dozen or so plates and bowls from Vietnam, Bali and, believe it or not, SM.

The same gold-dipped tiles and so-called metallic wall coverings under the brand name Slatex have found their way in the living room fireplace wedged between a series of glass shelves.

Don't laugh, but the fireplace works. "It can get quite cold out here during certain months," he swears.

And where do Tammy's inputs come in?

"I have simple needs," she says. "In fact, I'd be happy living in a nipa hut. But don't get me wrong, since I love this house. I support my husband's ideas since he's the expert."

The kitchen happens to be Tammy's domain, and Cordoba has made sure that she'll have everything within reach once they start frequenting the place.

But don't be surprised if the bright yellow kitchen with equally vivid accent pieces in red, apple green and yellow orange is totally out of synch with the rest of the house. The husband had a series of dividers built to conceal it.

"I had already bought materials for the kitchen even before construction began," he explains.

Indeed, old habits die hard. Before making a name for himself as an interior designer, Cordoba honed his skills as a production designer for Superstory Philippines.

He later did the set of such TV shows as "Two for the Road" and "Martin and Pepa," among others. His cronies former First Lady Imelda Marcos among his star clients.

After all these years, Cordoba's background on stage and TV is still evident in his use of accent walls and tiles made of resin. He also used artificial plants in areas beyond the sun's reach.

"They're durable enough to last several years," he says of such faux elements.

And what if they fail to withstand the test of time? No problem, as Cordoba will always be there to address it.

High maintenance is definitely one adjective that best sums up La Mesquita de Cordoba.

E-mail the author at overgroup@inquirer.com.ph

pired gazebo